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LORD TENNYSON

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IDYLLS OF THE KING

IN TWELVE BOOKS

BY

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

EDITED WITH NOTES BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE.

THIS edition of the *Idylls of the King*, like that of *In Memoriam*, was begun more than ten years ago, but, like that, was laid aside for other work. I have been often urged by teachers and literary friends to finish it, but have not found time to do it until now.

The poet, who had given me valuable help in revising my editions of *The Princess* and the two volumes of selections from his works published in 1884 and 1887, kindly encouraged me in the plan of editing others, as the present Lord Tennyson has also done. I am particularly under obligations to the latter for calling my attention to the remarkable paper on the *Idylls* in the *Contemporary Review* for May, 1873 (see pages 181–190), which gives the poet's own explanation of the allegory, as well as of certain "artistic unities" in the work which the reader might not detect, and which the critics have been slow to discern. It is the most important criticism of the *Idylls* that has appeared, but it seems to be little known in this country, — mainly, I suspect, on account of its accidental omission from the otherwise quite exhaustive list of reviews and criticisms in Poole's *Index to Periodical Literature*.

I have retained the poet's spelling of *Idylls*, though it is not adopted in other American editions, and is contrary to the analogy of *beryl*, *sibyl*, and other derivatives from Greek originals of similar form. It is curious, by the way, that in *The Princess* (vii. 176) all the English editions from 1847 down to the present time have "Idyl." I believe that this is the only instance of the word in Tennyson's verse except the one in the Dedication of these *Idylls*.

As in *The Princess* and the other books, I have followed the poet's orthography (except in words like *color*, *honor*, etc.) and his restricted use of the apostrophe in past tenses. I have, however, attempted (see *Addendum*, page 219), to correct the inaccuracies and incongruities in the pointing, capitalization, etc., of the English editions.

The Notes give the history of the poems, the variations in the text of

the earliest and latest editions, explanations of archaisms, obscurities, personal and local names, allusions, etc., and other matter which I thought likely to be serviceable or interesting to readers and students. On pages 180, 181, I give a select list of books which the teacher and the student will find useful for collateral reading and reference.

CAMBRIDGE, *May 25, 1896.*

PART I

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

AND OTHER IDYLLS OF THE KING

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IDYLLS OF THE KING.

IN TWELVE BOOKS.

'*Flos Regum Arthurus*.'—JOSEPH OF EXETER.

DEDICATION.

THESE to His Memory — since he held them dear,
Perchance as finding there unconsciously
Some image of himself — I dedicate,
I dedicate, I consecrate with tears —
These Idylls.

And indeed He seems to me
Scarce other than my king's ideal knight,
'Who reverenced his conscience as his king;
Whose glory was, redressing human wrong;
Who spake no slander, no, nor listen'd to it;
Who loved one only and who clave to her —'
Her — over all whose realms to their last isle,
Commingled with the gloom of imminent war,
The shadow of His loss drew like eclipse,
Darkening the world. We have lost him: he is gone:
We know him now: all narrow jealousies
Are silent; and we see him as he moved,
How modest, kindly, all-accomplish'd, wise,
With what sublime repression of himself,
And in what limits, and how tenderly;
Not swaying to this faction or to that;
Not making his high place the lawless perch

Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage-ground
For pleasure; but thro' all this tract of years
Wearing the white flower of a blameless life,
Before a thousand peering littlenesses,
In that fierce light which beats upon a throne
And blackens every blot: for where is he
Who dares foreshadow for an only son
A lovelier life, a more unstain'd, than his?
Or how should England dreaming of *his* sons
Hope more for these than some inheritance
Of such a life, a heart, a mind as thine,
Thou noble Father of her Kings to be,
Laborious for her people and her poor —
Voice in the rich dawn of an ampler day —
Far-sighted summoner of War and Waste
To fruitful strifes and rivalries of peace —
Sweet nature gilded by the gracious gleam
Of letters, dear to Science, dear to Art,
Dear to thy land and ours, a Prince indeed,
Beyond all titles, and a household name,
Hereafter, thro' all times, Albert the Good.

Break not, O woman's-heart, but still endure;
Break not, for thou art royal, but endure,
Remembering all the beauty of that star
Which shone so close beside Thee that ye made
One light together, but has past and leaves
The Crown a lonely splendor.

May all love,
His love, unseen but felt, o'ershadow Thee,
The love of all Thy sons encompass Thee,
The love of all Thy daughters cherish Thee,
The love of all Thy people comfort Thee,
Till God's love set Thee at his side again!

THE COMING OF ARTHUR.

Leodogran, the king of Cameliard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other child;
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle and, ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land;
And still from time to time the heathen host
Swarm'd over-seas, and harried what was left.
And so there grew great tracts of wilderness,
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur came.
For first Aurelius lived and fought and died,
And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either fail'd to make the kingdom one.
And after these King Arthur for a space,
And thro' the puissance of his Table Round,
Drew all their petty princedoms under him,
Their king and head, and made a realm and reign'd.

And thus the land of Cameliard was waste,
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast therein,
And none or few to scare or chase the beast;
So that wild dog and wolf and boar and bear
Came night and day, and rooted in the fields,
And wallow'd in the gardens of the King.

And ever and anon the wolf would steal
The children and devour, but now and then,
Her own brood lost or dead, lent her fierce teat
To human sucklings; and the children, housed
In her foul den, there at their meat would growl,
And mock their foster-mother on four feet,
Till, straighten'd, they grew up to wolf-like men,
Worse than the wolves. And King Leodogran
Groan'd for the Roman legions here again
And Cæsar's eagle: then his brother king,
Urien, assail'd him: last a heathen horde,
Reddening the sun with smoke and earth with blood,
And on the spike that split the mother's heart
Spitting the child, brake on him, till, amazed,
He knew not whither he should turn for aid.

But — for he heard of Arthur newly crown'd,
Tho' not without an uproar made by those
Who cried, 'He is not Uther's son' — the King
Sent to him, saying, 'Arise, and help us thou!
For here between the man and beast we die.'

And Arthur yet had done no deed of arms,
But heard the call and came: and Guinevere
Stood by the castle walls to watch him pass;
But since he neither wore on helm or shield
The golden symbol of his kinglihood,
But rode a simple knight among his knights,
And many of these in richer arms than he,
She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she saw,
One among many, tho' his face was bare.
But Arthur, looking downward as he past,
Felt the light of her eyes into his life
Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and pitch'd

His tents beside the forest. Then he drave
The heathen; after, slew the beast, and fell'd
The forest, letting in the sun, and made
Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight,
And so return'd.

For while he linger'd there,
A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts
Of those great lords and barons of his realm
Flash'd forth and into war; for most of these,
Colleaguing with a score of petty kings,
Made head against him, crying: 'Who is he
That he should rule us? who hath proven him
King Uther's son? for lo! we look at him,
And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor voice,
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.
This is the son of Gorloïs, not the King;
This is the son of Anton, not the King.'

And Arthur, passing thence to battle, felt
Travail, and throes and agonies of the life,
Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere,
And thinking as he rode: 'Her father said
That there between the man and beast they die.
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts
Up to my throne and side by side with me?
What happiness to reign a lonely king,
Vext — O ye stars that shudder over me,
O earth that soundest hollow under me,
Vext with waste dreams? for saving I be join'd
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will nor work my work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm

Victor and lord. But were I join'd with her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live.'

Thereafter — as he speaks who tells the tale —
When Arthur reach'd a field of battle bright
With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the world
Was all so clear about him that he saw
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill,
And even in high day the morning star.
So when the King had set his banner broad,
At once from either side, with trumpet-blast,
And shouts, and clarions shrilling unto blood,
The long-lanced battle let their horses run.
And now the barons and the kings prevail'd,
And now the King, as here and there that war
Went swaying; but the Powers who walk the world
Made lightnings and great thunders over him,
And dazed all eyes, till Arthur by main might,
And mightier of his hands with every blow,
And leading all his knighthood threw the kings
Carádos, Urien, Cradlemont of Wales,
Claudius, and Clariance of Northumberland,
The King Brandagoras of Latangor,
With Anguisant of Erin, Morganore,
And Lot of Orkney. Then, before a voice
As dreadful as the shout of one who sees
To one who sins, and deems himself alone
And all the world asleep, they swerved and brake
Flying, and Arthur call'd to stay the brands
That hack'd among the flyers, 'Ho! they yield!'
So like a painted battle the war stood

Silenced, the living quiet as the dead,
And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord.
He laugh'd upon his warrior whom he loved
And honor'd most. 'Thou dost not doubt me King,
So well thine arm hath wrought for me to-day.'
'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of God
Descends upon thee in the battle-field:
I know thee for my King!' Whereat the two,
For each had warded either in the fight,
Sware on the field of death a deathless love.
And Arthur said, 'Man's word is God in man:
Let chance what will, I trust thee to the death.'

Then quickly from the foughten field he sent
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,
Saying, 'If I in aught have served thee well,
Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife.'

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in heart
Debating — 'How should I that am a king,
However much he holp me at my need,
Give my one daughter saving to a king,
And a king's son?' — lifted his voice, and call'd
A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
He trusted all things, and of him required
His counsel: 'Knowest thou aught of Arthur's birth?'

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and said:
'Sir King, there be but two old men that know;
And each is twice as old as I: and one
Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served
King Uther thro' his magic art; and one
Is Merlin's master — so they call him — Bleys,

Who taught him magic ; but the scholar ran
Before the master, and so far that Bleys
Laid magic by, and sat him down, and wrote
All things and whatsoever Merlin did
In one great annal-book, where after-years
Will learn the secret of our Arthur's birth.'

To whom the King Leodogran replied :
'O friend, had I been holpen half as well
By this King Arthur as by thee to-day,
Then beast and man had had their share of me;
But summon here before us yet once more
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere.'

Then, when they came before him, the King said :
'I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser fowl,
And reason in the chase ; but wherefore now
Do these your lords stir up the heat of war,
Some calling Arthur born of Gorloïs,
Others of Anton ? Tell me, ye yourselves,
Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son ? '

And Ulfius and Brastias answer'd, ' Ay.'
Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning, spake —
For bold in heart and act and word was he,
Whenever slander breathed against the King —

' Sir, there be many rumors on this head :
For there be those who hate him in their hearts,
Call him baseborn, and since his ways are sweet,
And theirs are bestial, hold him less than man ;
And there be those who deem him more than man,
And dream he dropt from heaven : but my belief

In all this matter — so ye care to learn —
Sir, for ye know that in King Uther's time
The prince and warrior Gorloïs, he that held
Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,
Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne;
And daughters had she borne him, — one whereof,
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent,
Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved
To Arthur, — but a son she had not borne.
And Uther cast upon her eyes of love;
But she, a stainless wife to Gorloïs,
So loathed the bright dishonor of his love
That Gorloïs and King Uther went to war,
And overthrown was Gorloïs and slain.
Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged
Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,
Seeing the mighty swarm about their walls,
Left her and fled, and Uther enter'd in,
And there was none to call to but himself.
So, compass'd by the power of the King,
Enforced she was to wed him in her tears,
And with a shameful swiftness; afterward,
Not many moons, King Uther died himself,
Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule
After him, lest the realm should go to wrack.
And that same night, the night of the new year,
By reason of the bitterness and grief
That vext his mother, all before his time
Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born
Deliver'd at a secret postern-gate
To Merlin, to be holden far apart
Until his hour should come; because the lords
Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,
Wild beasts, and surely would have torn the child

Piecemeal among them, had they known ; for each
But sought to rule for his own self and hand,
And many hated Uther for the sake
Of Gorloïs. Wherefore Merlin took the child,
And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight
And ancient friend of Uther ; and his wife
Nursed the young prince, and rear'd him with her own ;
And no man knew. And ever since the lords
Have foughten like wild beasts among themselves,
So that the realm has gone to wrack ; but now,
This year, when Merlin — for his hour had come —
Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the hall,
Proclaiming, "Here is Uther's heir, your king,"
A hundred voices cried : "Away with him !
No king of ours ! a son of Gorloïs he;
Or else the child of Anton, and no king,
Or else baseborn." Yet Merlin thro' his craft,
And while the people clamor'd for a king,
Had Arthur crown'd ; but after, the great lords
Banded, and so brake out in open war.'

Then while the King debated with himself
If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,
Or born the son of Gorloïs after death,
Or Uther's son and born before his time,
Or whether there were truth in anything
Said by these three, there came to Cameliard,
With Gawain and young Modred, her two sons,
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent ;
Whom as he could, not as he would, the King
Made feast for, saying, as they sat at meat :
'A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas.
Ye come from Arthur's court. Victor his men
Report him ! Yea, but ye — think ye this king —
So many those that hate him, and so strong,

So few his knights, however brave they be —
Hath body enow to hold his foemen down?'

'O King,' she cried, 'and I will tell thee: few,
Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him;
For I was near him when the savage yells
Of Uther's peerage died, and Arthur sat
Crowned on the daïs, and his warriors cried,
"Be thou the king, and we will work thy will
Who love thee." Then the King in low deep tones,
And simple words of great authority,
Bound them by so strait vows to his own self
That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some
Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
Some flush'd, and others dazed, as one who wakes
Half-blinded at the coming of a light.

'But when he spake, and cheer'd his Table Round
With large, divine, and comfortable words,
Beyond my tongue to tell thee — I beheld
From eye to eye thro' all their Order flash
A momentary likeness of the King;
And ere it left their faces, thro' the cross
And those around it and the Crucified,
Down from the casement over Arthur, smote
Flame-color, vert, and azure, in three rays,
One falling upon each of three fair queens
Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends
Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright
Sweet faces, who will help him at his need.

'And there I saw mage Merlin, whose vast wit
And hundred winters are but as the hands
Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege.

'And near him stood the Lady of the Lake,
Who knows a subtler magic than his own —
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.
She gave the King his huge cross-hilted sword,
Whereby to drive the heathen out: a mist
Of incense curl'd about her, and her face
Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom;
But there was heard among the holy hymns
A voice as of the waters, for she dwells
Down in a deep — calm, whatsoever storms
May shake the world — and when the surface rolls,
Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.

'There likewise I beheld Excalibur
Before him at his crowning borne, the sword
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
And Arthur row'd across and took it — rich
With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye — the blade so bright
That men are blinded by it — on one side,
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,
"Take me," but turn the blade and ye shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,
"Cast me away!" And sad was Arthur's face
Taking it, but old Merlin counsell'd him,
"Take thou and strike! the time to cast away
Is yet far-off." So this great brand the king
Took, and by this will beat his foemen down.'

Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but thought
To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask'd,
Fixing full eyes of question on her face,
'The swallow and the swift are near akin,
But thou art closer to this noble prince,

Being his own dear sister;' and she said,
'Daughter of Gorloïs and Ygerne am I;'
'And therefore Arthur's sister?' ask'd the King.
She answer'd, 'These be secret things,' and sign'd
To those two sons to pass, and let them be.
And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Sprang out, and follow'd by his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw;
But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,
And there half-heard — the same that afterward
Struck for the throne, and striking found his doom.

And then the Queen made answer: 'What know I?
For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,
And dark in hair and eyes am I; and dark
Was Gorloïs; yea, and dark was Uther too,
Wellnigh to blackness; but this king is fair
Beyond the race of Britons and of men.
Moreover, always in my mind I hear
A cry from out the dawning of my life,
A mother weeping, and I hear her say,
"O that ye had some brother, pretty one,
To guard thee on the rough ways of the world."'

'Ay,' said the King, 'and hear ye such a cry?
But when did Arthur chance upon thee first?'

'O King!' she cried, 'and I will tell thee true:
He found me first when yet a little maid:
Beaten I had been for a little fault
Whereof I was not guilty; and out I ran
And flung myself down on a bank of heath,
And hated this fair world and all therein,
And wept, and wish'd that I were dead; and he —

I know not whether of himself he came,
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say, can walk
Unseen at pleasure — he was at my side,
And spake sweet words, and comforted my heart,
And dried my tears, being a child with me.
And many a time he came, and evermore
As I grew greater grew with me; and sad
At times he seem'd, and sad with him was I,
Stern too at times, and then I loved him not,
But sweet again, and then I loved him well.
And now of late I see him less and less,
But those first days had golden hours for me,
For then I surely thought he would be king.

'But let me tell thee now another tale:
For Bleys, our Merlin's master, as they say,
Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,
To hear him speak before he left his life.
Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the mage;
And when I enter'd told me that himself
And Merlin ever served about the King,
Uther, before he died; and on the night
When Uther in Tintagil past away
Moaning and wailing for an heir, the two
Left the still King, and passing forth to breathe,
Then from the castle gateway by the chasm
Descending thro' the dismal night — a night
In which the bounds of heaven and earth were lost —
Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps
It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shape thereof
A dragon wing'd, and all from stem to stern
Bright with a shining people on the decks,
And gone as soon as seen. And then the two
Dropt to the cove, and watch'd the great sea fall,
Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,

Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep
And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:
And down the wave and in the flame was borne
A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,
Who stoopt and caught the babe, and cried, "The King!
Here is an heir for Uther!" And the fringe
Of that great breaker, sweeping up the strand,
Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word,
And all at once all round him rose in fire,
So that the child and he were clothed in fire.
And presently thereafter follow'd calm,
Free sky and stars: "And this same child," he said,
"Is he who reigns; nor could I part in peace
Till this were told." And saying this the seer
Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of death,
Not ever to be question'd any more
Save on the further side; but when I met
Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were truth —
The shining dragon and the naked child
Descending in the glory of the seas —
He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me
In riddling triplets of old time, and said: —

'"Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the sky!
A young man will be wiser by and by;
An old man's wit may wander ere he die.

Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the lea!
And truth is this to me, and that to thee;
And truth or clothed or naked let it be.

Rain, sun, and rain! and the free blossom blows:
Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he who knows?
From the great deep to the great deep he goes."

'So Merlin riddling anger'd me; but thou
Fear not to give this King thine only child,
Guinevere: so great bards of him will sing
Hereafter; and dark sayings from of old
Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of men,
And echo'd by old folk beside their fires
For comfort after their wage-work is done,
Speak of the King; and Merlin in our time
Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn
Tho' men may wound him that he will not die,
But pass, again to come, and then or now
Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,
Till these and all men hail him for their king.'

She spake and King Leodogran rejoiced,
But musing 'Shall I answer yea or nay?'
Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept, and saw,
Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,
Field after field, up to a height, the peak
Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom king,
Now looming, and now lost; and on the slope
The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd was driven,
Fire glimpsed; and all the land from roof and rick,
In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,
Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with the haze
And made it thicker; while the phantom king
Sent out at times a voice; and here or there
Stood one who pointed toward the voice, the rest
Slew on and burnt, crying, 'No king of ours,
No son of Uther, and no king of ours;'
Till with a wink his dream was changed, the haze
Descended, and the solid earth became
As nothing, but the King stood out in heaven,
Crown'd. And Leodogran awoke, and sent

Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
Back to the court of Arthur answering yea.

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom he loved
And honor'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride forth
And bring the Queen, and watch'd him from the gates;
And Lancelot past away among the flowers —
For then was latter April — and return'd
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere.
To whom arrived, by Dubric the high saint,
Chief of the church in Britain, and before
The stateliest of her altar-shrines, the King
That morn was married, while in stainless white,
The fair beginners of a nobler time,
And glorying in their vows and him, his knights
Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy.
Far shone the fields of May thro' open door,
The sacred altar blossom'd white with May,
The Sun of May descended on their King,
They gazed on all earth's beauty in their Queen,
Roll'd incense, and there past along the hymns
A voice as of the waters, while the two
Sware at the shrine of Christ a deathless love:
And Arthur said, 'Behold, thy doom is mine.
Let chance what will, I love thee to the death!'
To whom the Queen replied with drooping eyes,
'King and my lord, I love thee to the death!'
And holy Dubric spread his hands and spake:
'Reign ye, and live and love, and make the world
Other, and may thy Queen be one with thee,
And all this Order of thy Table Round
Fulfil the boundless purpose of their King!'

So Dubric said; but when they left the shrine
Great lords from Rome before the portal stood,
In scornful stillness gazing as they past;
Then while they paced a city all on fire
With sun and cloth of gold, the trumpets blew,
And Arthur's knighthood sang before the King:—

'Blow trumpet, for the world is white with May!
Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd away!
Blow thro' the living world—"Let the King reign!"

'Shall Rome or Heathen rule in Arthur's realm?
Flash brand and lance, fall battle-axe upon helm,
Fall battle-axe, and flash brand! Let the King reign!

'Strike for the King and live! his knights have heard
That God hath told the King a secret word.
Fall battle-axe, and flash brand! Let the King reign!

'Blow trumpet! he will lift us from the dust.
Blow trumpet! live the strength, and die the lust!
Clang battle-axe, and clash brand! Let the King reign!

'Strike for the King and die! and if thou diest,
The King is king, and ever wills the highest.
Clang battle-axe, and clash brand! Let the King reign!

'Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his May!
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day!
Clang battle-axe, and clash brand! Let the King reign!

'The King will follow Christ, and we the King,
In whom high God hath breathed a secret thing.
Fall battle-axe, and clash brand! Let the King reign!'

So sang the knighthood, moving to their hall.
There at the banquet those great lords from Rome,
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
Strode in and claim'd their tribute as of yore.
But Arthur spake: 'Behold, for these have sworn
To wage my wars, and worship me their King;
The old order changeth, yielding place to new;
And we that fight for our fair father Christ,
Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old
To drive the heathen from your Roman wall,
No tribute will we pay.' So those great lords
Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a space
Were all one will, and thro' that strength the King
Drew in the petty princedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reign'd.

THE ROUND TABLE.

GARETH AND LYNETTE.
THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT.
GERAINT AND ENID.
BALIN AND BALAN.
MERLIN AND VIVIEN.
LANCELOT AND ELAINE.
THE HOLY GRAIL.
PELLEAS AND ETTARRE.
THE LAST TOURNAMENT.
GUINEVERE.

GARETH AND LYNETTE.

THE last tall son of Lot and Bellicent,
And tallest, Gareth, in a showerful spring
Stared at the spate. A slender-shafted pine
Lost footing, fell, and so was whirl'd away.
'How he went down,' said Gareth, 'as a false knight
Or evil king before my lance, if lance
Were mine to use — O senseless cataract,
Bearing all down in thy precipitancy —
And yet thou art but swollen with cold snows
And mine is living blood: thou dost His will,
The Maker's, and not knowest, and I that know,
Have strength and wit, in my good mother's hall
Linger with vacillating obedience,
Prison'd, and kept and coax'd and whistled to —
Since the good mother holds me still a child!
Good mother is bad mother unto me!
A worse were better; yet no worse would I.
Heaven yield her for it, but in me put force
To weary her ears with one continuous prayer,
Until she let me fly discaged to sweep
In ever-highering eagle-circles up

To the great Sun of Glory, and thence swoop
Down upon all things base, and dash them dead,
A knight of Arthur, working out his will,
To cleanse the world. Why, Gawain, when he came
With Modred hither in the summer-time,
Ask'd me to tilt with him, the proven knight.
Modred for want of worthier was the judge.
Then I so shook him in the saddle, he said,
"Thou hast half prevail'd against me," said so — he —
Tho' Modred biting his thin lips was mute,
For he is alway sullen: what care I?'

And Gareth went, and hovering round her chair
Ask'd, 'Mother, tho' ye count me still the child,
Sweet mother, do ye love the child?' She laugh'd,
'Thou art but a wild-goose to question it.'
'Then, mother, an ye love the child,' he said,
'Being a goose and rather tame than wild,
Hear the child's story.' 'Yea, my well-beloved,
An 't were but of the goose and golden eggs.'

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling eyes:
'Nay, nay, good mother, but this egg of mine
Was finer gold than any goose can lay;
For this an eagle, a royal eagle, laid
Almost beyond eye-reach, on such a palm
As glitters gilded in thy Book of Hours.
And there was ever haunting round the palm
A lusty youth, but poor, who often saw
The splendor sparkling from aloft, and thought,
"An I could climb and lay my hand upon it,
Then were I wealthier than a leash of kings."
But ever when he reach'd a hand to climb,
One that had loved him from his childhood caught

And stay'd him, "Climb not lest thou break thy neck,
I charge thee by my love," and so the boy,
Sweet mother, neither clomb nor brake his neck,
But brake his very heart in pining for it,
And past away.'

To whom the mother said,
'True love, sweet son, had risk'd himself and climb'd,
And handed down the golden treasure to him.'

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling eyes:
'Gold? said I gold? — ay then, why he, or she,
Or whosoe'er it was, or half the world
Had ventured — *had* the thing I spake of been
Mere gold — but this was all of that true steel
Whereof they forged the brand Excalibur,
And lightnings play'd about it in the storm,
And all the little fowl were flurried at it,
And there were cries and clashings in the nest,
That sent him from his senses: let me go.'

Then Bellicent bemoan'd herself and said:
'Hast thou no pity upon my loneliness?
Lo, where thy father Lot beside the hearth
Lies like a log, and all but smoulder'd out!
For ever since when traitor to the King
He fought against him in the barons' war,
And Arthur gave him back his territory,
His age hath slowly droopt, and now lies there
A yet-warm corpse, and yet unburiable,
No more; nor sees, nor hears, nor speaks, nor knows.
And both thy brethren are in Arthur's hall,
Albeit neither loved with that full love
I feel for thee, nor worthy such a love.

Stay therefore thou; red berries charm the bird,
And thee, mine innocent, the jousts, the wars,
Who never knewest finger-ache, nor pang
Of wrench'd or broken limb — an often chance
In those brain-stunning shocks, and tourney-falls,
Frights to my heart; but stay: follow the deer
By these tall firs and our fast-falling burns;
So make thy manhood mightier day by day;
Sweet is the chase: and I will seek thee out
Some comfortable bride and fair, to grace
Thy climbing life, and cherish my prone year,
Till falling into Lot's forgetfulness
I know not thee, myself, nor anything.
Stay, my best son! ye are yet more boy than man.'

Then Gareth: 'An ye hold me yet for child,
Hear yet once more the story of the child.
For, mother, there was once a king, like ours.
The prince his heir, when tall and marriageable,
Ask'd for a bride; and thereupon the king
Set two before him. One was fair, strong, arm'd —
But to be won by force — and many men
Desired her; one, good lack, no man desired.
And these were the conditions of the king:
That save he won the first by force, he needs
Must wed that other, whom no man desired,
A red-faced bride who knew herself so vile
That evermore she long'd to hide herself,
Nor fronted man or woman, eye to eye —
Yea — some she cleaved to, but they died of her.
And one — they call'd her Fame; and one — O mother,
How can ye keep me tether'd to you? — Shame.
Man am I grown, a man's work must I do.
Follow the deer? follow the Christ, the King,

Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King —
Else, wherefore born?'

To whom the mother said:
'Sweet son, for there be many who deem him not,
Or will not deem him, wholly proven King —
Albeit in mine own heart I knew him King
When I was frequent with him in my youth,
And heard him kingly speak, and doubted him
No more than he, himself; but felt him mine,
Of closest kin to me: yet — wilt thou leave
Thine easeful biding here, and risk thine all,
Life, limbs, for one that is not proven King?
Stay, till the cloud that settles round his birth
Hath lifted but a little. Stay, sweet son.'

And Gareth answer'd quickly: 'Not an hour,
So that ye yield me — I will walk thro' fire,
Mother, to gain it — your full leave to go.
Not proven, who swept the dust of ruin'd Rome
From off the threshold of the realm, and crush'd
The idolaters, and made the people free?
Who should be king save him who makes us free?'

So when the Queen, who long had sought in vain
To break him from the intent to which he grew,
Found her son's will unwaveringly one,
She answer'd craftily: 'Will ye walk thro' fire?
Who walks thro' fire will hardly heed the smoke.
Ay, go then, an ye must: only one proof,
Before thou ask the King to make thee knight,
Of thine obedience and thy love to me,
Thy mother, — I demand.'

And Gareth cried:
'A hard one, or a hundred, so I go.
Nay — quick! the proof to prove me to the quick!'

But slowly spake the mother looking at him:
'Prince, thou shalt go disguised to Arthur's hall,
And hire thyself to serve for meats and drinks
Among the scullions and the kitchen-knaves,
And those that hand the dish across the bar.
Nor shalt thou tell thy name to any one.
And thou shalt serve a twelvemonth and a day.'

For so the Queen believed that when her son
Beheld his only way to glory lead
Low down thro' villain kitchen-vassalage,
Her own true Gareth was too princely-proud
To pass thereby; so should he rest with her,
Closed in her castle from the sound of arms.

Silent awhile was Gareth, then replied:
'The thrall in person may be free in soul,
And I shall see the jousts. Thy son am I,
And, since thou art my mother, must obey.
I therefore yield me freely to thy will;
For hence will I, disguised, and hire myself
To serve with scullions and with kitchen-knaves;
Nor tell my name to any — no, not the King.'

Gareth awhile linger'd. The mother's eye
Full of the wistful fear that he would go,
And turning toward him wheresoe'er he turn'd,
Perplext his outward purpose, till an hour
When, waken'd by the wind which with full voice
Swept bellowing thro' the darkness on to dawn,

He rose, and out of slumber calling two
That still had tended on him from his birth,
Before the wakeful mother heard him, went.

The three were clad like tillers of the soil.
Southward they set their faces. The birds made
Melody on branch and melody in mid air.
The damp hill-slopes were quicken'd into green,
And the live green had kindled into flowers,
For it was past the time of Easter-day.

So, when their feet were planted on the plain
That broaden'd toward the base of Camelot,
Far off they saw the silver-misty morn
Rolling her smoke about the royal mount,
That rose between the forest and the field.
At times the summit of the high city flash'd;
At times the spires and turrets half-way down
Prick'd thro' the mist; at times the great gate shone
Only, that open'd on the field below:
Anon, the whole fair city had disappear'd.

Then those who went with Gareth were amazed,
One crying, 'Let us go no further, lord:
Here is a city of enchanters, built
By fairy kings.' The second echo'd him,
'Lord, we have heard from our wise man at home
To northward, that this king is not the King,
But only changeling out of Fairyland,
Who drave the heathen hence by sorcery
And Merlin's glamour.' Then the first again,
'Lord, there is no such city anywhere,
But all a vision.'

Gareth answer'd them
With laughter, swearing he had glamour enow
In his own blood, his princedom, youth, and hopes,
To plunge old Merlin in the Arabian sea;
So push'd them all unwilling toward the gate.
And there was no gate like it under heaven.
For barefoot on the keystone, which was lined
And rippled like an ever-fleeting wave,
The Lady of the Lake stood: all her dress
Wept from her sides as water flowing away;
But like the cross her great and goodly arms
Stretch'd under all the cornice and upheld:
And drops of water fell from either hand;
And down from one a sword was hung, from one
A censer, either worn with wind and storm;
And o'er her breast floated the sacred fish;
And in the space to left of her, and right,
Were Arthur's wars in weird devices done,
New things and old co-twisted, as if Time
Were nothing, so inveterately that men
Were giddy gazing there; and over all
High on the top were those three queens, the friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need.

Then those with Gareth for so long a space
Stared at the figures that at last it seem'd
The dragon-boughts and elvish emblemings
Began to move, seethe, twine, and curl: they call'd
To Gareth, 'Lord, the gateway is alive.'

And Gareth likewise on them fixt his eyes
So long that even to him they seem'd to move.
Out of the city a blast of music peal'd.
Back from the gate started the three, to whom

From out thereunder came an ancient man,
Long-bearded, saying, 'Who be ye, my sons?'

Then Gareth: 'We be tillers of the soil,
Who leaving share in furrow come to see
The glories of our King: but these, my men, —
Your city moved so weirdly in the mist —
Doubt if the King be king at all, or come
From Fairyland; and whether this be built
By magic, and by fairy kings and queens;
Or whether there be any city at all,
Or all a vision: and this music now
Hath scared them both, but tell thou these the truth.'

Then that old Seer made answer, playing on him
And saying: 'Son, I have seen the good ship sail
Keel upward, and mast downward, in the heavens,
And solid turrets topsy-turvy in air:
And here is truth; but an it please thee not,
Take thou the truth as thou hast told it me.
For truly, as thou sayest, a fairy king
And fairy queens have built the city, son;
They came from out a sacred mountain-cleft
Toward the sunrise, each with harp in hand,
And built it to the music of their harps.
And, as thou sayest, it is enchanted, son,
For there is nothing in it as it seems
Saving the King; tho' some there be that hold
The King a shadow, and the city real:
Yet take thou heed of him, for, so thou pass
Beneath this archway, then wilt thou become
A thrall to his enchantments, for the King
Will bind thee by such vows as is a shame
A man should not be bound by, yet the which

No man can keep ; but, so thou dread to swear,
Pass not beneath this gateway, but abide
Without, among the cattle of the field.
For an ye heard a music, like enow
They are building still, seeing the city is built
To music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built for ever.'

Gareth spake
Anger'd: 'Old master, reverence thine own beard
That looks as white as utter truth, and seems
Wellnigh as long as thou art statured tall!
Why mockest thou the stranger that hath been
To thee fair-spoken?'

But the Seer replied:
'Know ye not then the Riddling of the Bards:
'Confusion, and illusion, and relation,
Elusion, and occasion, and evasion"?
I mock thee not but as thou mockest me,
And all that see thee, for thou art not who
Thou seemest, but I know thee who thou art.
And now thou goest up to mock the King,
Who cannot brook the shadow of any lie.'

Unmockingly the mocker ending here
Turn'd to the right, and past along the plain;
Whom Gareth looking after said: 'My men,
Our one white lie sits like a little ghost
Here on the threshold of our enterprise.
Let love be blamed for it, not she, nor I:
Well, we will make amends.'

With all good cheer
He spake and laugh'd, then enter'd with his twain

Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces
And stately, rich in emblem and the work
Of ancient kings who did their days in stone;
Which Merlin's hand, the Mage at Arthur's court,
Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and everywhere,
At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening peak
And pinnacle, and had made it spire to heaven.
And ever and anon a knight would pass
Outward, or inward to the hall: his arms
Clash'd; and the sound was good to Gareth's ear.
And out of bower and casement shyly glanced
Eyes of pure women, wholesome stars of love;
And all about a healthful people stept
As in the presence of a gracious king.

Then into hall Gareth ascending heard
A voice, the voice of Arthur, and beheld
Far over heads in that long-vaulted hall
The splendor of the presence of the King
Throned, and delivering doom — and look'd no more —
But felt his young heart hammering in his ears,
And thought, 'For this half-shadow of a lie
The truthful King will doom me when I speak.'
Yet pressing on, tho' all in fear to find
Sir Gawain or Sir Modred, saw nor one
Nor other, but in all the listening eyes
Of those tall knights that ranged about the throne
Clear honor shining like the dewy star
Of dawn, and faith in their great King, with pure
Affection, and the light of victory,
And glory gain'd, and evermore to gain.

Then came a widow crying to the King:
'A boon, Sir King! Thy father, Uther, reft

From my dead lord a field with violence;
For howsoe'er at first he proffer'd gold,
Yet, for the field was pleasant in our eyes,
We yielded not; and then he reft us of it
Perforce and left us neither gold nor field.'

Said Arthur, 'Whether would ye? gold or field?'
To whom the woman weeping, 'Nay, my lord,
The field was pleasant in my husband's eye.'

And Arthur: 'Have thy pleasant field again,
And thrice the gold for Uther's use thereof,
According to the years. No boon is here,
But justice, so thy say be proven true.
Accursed, who from the wrongs his father did
Would shape himself a right!'

And while she past,
Came yet another widow crying to him:
'A boon, Sir King! Thine enemy, King, am I.
With thine own hand thou slewest my dear lord,
A knight of Uther in the barons' war,
When Lot and many another rose and fought
Against thee, saying thou wert basely born.
I held with these, and loathe to ask thee aught.
Yet lo! my husband's brother had my son
Thrall'd in his castle, and hath starved him dead,
And standeth seized of that inheritance
Which thou that slewest the sire hast left the son.
So, tho' I scarce can ask it thee for hate,
Grant me some knight to do the battle for me,
Kill the foul thief, and wreak me for my son.'

Then strode a good knight forward, crying to him,
'A boon, Sir King! I am her kinsman, I.
Give me to right her wrong, and slay the man.'

Then came Sir Kay, the seneschal, and cried,
'A boon, Sir King! even that thou grant her none,
This railer, that hath mock'd thee in full hall —
None; or the wholesome boon of gyve and gag.'

But Arthur: 'We sit King, to help the wrong'd
Thro' all our realm. The woman loves her lord.
Peace to thee, woman, with thy loves and hates!
The kings of old had doom'd thee to the flames;
Aurelius Emrys would have scourged thee dead,
And Uther slit thy tongue: but get thee hence —
Lest that rough humor of the kings of old
Return upon me! Thou that art her kin,
Go likewise; lay him low and slay him not,
But bring him here, that I may judge the right,
According to the justice of the King:
Then, be he guilty, by that deathless King
Who lived and died for men, the man shall die.'

Then came in hall the messenger of Mark,
A name of evil savor in the land,
The Cornish king. In either hand he bore
What dazzled all, and shone far-off as shines
A field of charlock in the sudden sun
Between two showers, a cloth of palest gold,
Which down he laid before the throne, and knelt,
Delivering that his lord, the vassal king,
Was even upon his way to Camelot;
For having heard that Arthur of his grace
Had made his goodly cousin Tristram knight,

And, for himself was of the greater state,
Being a king, he trusted his liege-lord
Would yield him this large honor all the more;
So pray'd him well to accept this cloth of gold,
In token of true heart and fealty.

Then Arthur cried to rend the cloth, to rend
In pieces, and so cast it on the hearth.
An oak-tree smoulder'd there. 'The goodly knight!
What! shall the shield of Mark stand among these?'
For, midway down the side of that long hall,
A stately pile, — whereof along the front,
Some blazon'd, some but carven, and some blank,
There ran a treble range of stony shields, —
Rose, and high-arching overbrow'd the hearth.
And under every shield a knight was named.
For this was Arthur's custom in his hall:
When some good knight had done one noble deed,
His arms were carven only; but if twain,
His arms were blazon'd also; but if none,
The shield was blank and bare, without a sign
Saving the name beneath: and Gareth saw
The shield of Gawain blazon'd rich and bright,
And Modred's blank as death; and Arthur cried
To rend the cloth and cast it on the hearth.

'More like are we to reave him of his crown
Than make him knight because men call him king.
The kings we found, ye know we stay'd their hands
From war among themselves, but left them kings;
Of whom were any bounteous, merciful,
Truth-speaking, brave, good livers, them we enroll'd
Among us, and they sit within our hall.
But Mark hath tarnish'd the great name of king,

As Mark would sully the low state of churl;
And, seeing he hath sent us cloth of gold,
Return, and meet, and hold him from our eyes,
Lest we should lap him up in cloth of lead,
Silenced for ever — craven — a man of plots.
Craft, poisonous counsels, wayside ambushings —
No fault of thine: let Kay the seneschal
Look to thy wants, and send thee satisfied —
Accursed, who strikes nor lets the hand be seen!'

And many another suppliant crying came
With noise of ravage wrought by beast and man,
And evermore a knight would ride away.

Last, Gareth leaning both hands heavily
Down on the shoulders of the twain, his men,
Approach'd between them toward the King, and ask'd,
'A boon, Sir King,' — his voice was all ashamed, —
'For see ye not how weak and hunger-worn
I seem — leaning on these? grant me to serve
For meat and drink among thy kitchen-knaves
A twelvemonth and a day, nor seek my name.
Hereafter I will fight.'

To him the King:
'A goodly youth and worth a goodlier boon!
But so thou wilt no goodlier, then must Kay,
The master of the meats and drinks, be thine.'

He rose and past; then Kay, a man of mien
Wan-sallow as the plant that feels itself
Root-bitten by white lichen:

'Lo ye now!
This fellow hath broken from some abbey, where,

God wot, he had not beef and brewis enow,
However that might chance! but an he work,
Like any pigeon will I cram his crop,
And sleeker shall he shine than any hog.'

Then Lancelot standing near: 'Sir Seneschal,
Sleuth-hound thou knowest, and gray, and all the hounds;
A horse thou knowest, a man thou dost not know:
Broad brows and fair, a fluent hair and fine,
High nose, a nostril large and fine, and hands
Large, fair, and fine! — Some young lad's mystery —
But, or from sheepcot or king's hall, the boy
Is noble-natured. Treat him with all grace,
Lest he should come to shame thy judging of him.'

Then Kay: 'What murmurest thou of mystery?
Think ye this fellow will poison the King's dish?
Nay, for he spake too fool-like: mystery!
Tut, an the lad were noble, he had ask'd
For horse and armor: fair and fine, forsooth!
Sir Fine-face, Sir Fair-hands? but see thou to it
That thine own fineness, Lancelot, some fine day
Undo thee not — and leave my man to me.'

So Gareth all for glory underwent
The sooty yoke of kitchen-vassalage,
Ate with young lads his portion by the door,
And couch'd at night with grimy kitchen-knaves.
And Lancelot ever spake him pleasantly,
But Kay the seneschal, who loved him not,
Would hustle and harry him, and labor him
Beyond his comrade of the hearth, and set
To turn the broach, draw water, or hew wood,
Or grosser tasks; and Gareth bow'd himself

With all obedience to the King, and wrought
All kind of service with a noble ease
That graced the lowliest act in doing it.
And when the thralls had talk among themselves,
And one would praise the love that linkt the King
And Lancelot — how the King had saved his life
In battle twice, and Lancelot once the King's —
For Lancelot was first in the tournament,
But Arthur mightiest on the battle-field —
Gareth was glad. Or if some other told
How once the wandering forester at dawn,
Far over the blue tarns and hazy seas,
On Caer-Eryri's highest found the King,
A naked babe, of whom the Prophet spake,
'He passes to the Isle Avilion,
He passes and is heal'd and cannot die' —
Gareth was glad. But if their talk were foul,
Then would he whistle rapid as any lark,
Or carol some old roundelay, and so loud
That first they mock'd, but, after, reverenced him.
Or Gareth, telling some prodigious tale
Of knights who sliced a red life-bubbling way
Thro' twenty folds of twisted dragon, held
All in a gap-mouth'd circle his good mates
Lying or sitting round him, idle hands,
Charm'd; till Sir Kay, the seneschal, would come
Blustering upon them, like a sudden wind
Among dead leaves, and drive them all apart.
Or when the thralls had sport among themselves,
So there were any trial of mastery,
He, by two yards in casting bar or stone,
Was counted best; and if there chanced a joust,
So that Sir Kay nodded him leave to go,
Would hurry thither, and when he saw the knights

Clash like the coming and retiring wave,
And the spear spring, and good horse reel, the boy
Was half beyond himself for ecstasy.

So for a month he wrought among the thralls;
But in the weeks that follow'd, the good Queen,
Repentant of the word she made him swear,
And saddening in her childless castle, sent,
Between the in-crescent and de-crescent moon,
Arms for her son, and loosed him from his vow.

This, Gareth hearing from a squire of Lot
With whom he used to play at tourney once,
When both were children, and in lonely haunts
Would scratch a ragged oval on the sand,
And each at either dash from either end —
Shame never made girl redder than Gareth joy.
He laugh'd; he sprang. 'Out of the smoke, at once
I leap from Satan's foot to Peter's knee —
These news be mine, none other's — nay, the King's —
Descend into the city:' whereon he sought
The King alone, and found, and told him all.

'I have stagger'd thy strong Gawain in a tilt
For pastime; yea, he said it: joust can I.
Make me thy knight — in secret! let my name
Be hidden, and give me the first quest, I spring
Like flame from ashes.'

Here the King's calm eye
Fell on, and check'd, and made him flush, and bow
Lowly, to kiss his hand, who answer'd him:
'Son, the good mother let me know thee here,
And sent her wish that I would yield thee thine.

Make thee my knight? my knights are sworn to vows
Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,
And uttermost obedience to the King.'

Then Gareth, lightly springing from his knees:
'My King, for hardihood I can promise thee.
For uttermost obedience make demand
Of whom ye gave me to, the Seneschal,
No mellow master of the meats and drinks!
And as for love, God wot, I love not yet,
But love I shall, God willing.'

And the King:
'Make thee my knight in secret? yea, but he,
Our noblest brother, and our truest man,
And one with me in all, he needs must know.'

'Let Lancelot know, my King, let Lancelot know,
Thy noblest and thy truest!'

And the King:
'But wherefore would ye men should wonder at you?
Nay, rather for the sake of me, their King,
And the deed's sake my knighthood do the deed,
Than to be noised of.'

Merrily Gareth ask'd:
'Have I not earn'd my cake in baking of it?
Let be my name until I make my name!
My deeds will speak: it is but for a day.'
So with a kindly hand on Gareth's arm
Smiled the great King, and half-unwillingly
Loving his lusty youthhood yielded to him.

Then, after summoning Lancelot privily:
'I have given him the first quest: he is not proven.
Look therefore, when he calls for this in hall,
Thou get to horse and follow him far away.
Cover the lions on thy shield, and see,
Far as thou mayest, he be nor ta'en nor slain.'

Then that same day there past into the hall
A damsel of high lineage, and a brow
May-blossom, and a cheek of apple-blossom,
Hawk-eyes; and lightly was her slender nose
Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower:
She into hall past with her page and cried:

'O King, for thou hast driven the foe without,
See to the foe within! bridge, ford, beset
By bandits, every one that owns a tower
The lord for half a league. Why sit ye there?
Rest would I not, Sir King, an I were king,
Till even the lonest hold were all as free
From cursed bloodshed as thine altar-cloth
From that best blood it is a sin to spill.'

'Comfort thyself,' said Arthur, 'I nor mine
Rest: so my knighthood keep the vows they swore,
The wastest moorland of our realm shall be
Safe, damsel, as the centre of this hall.
What is thy name? thy need?'

'My name?' she said —
'Lynette, my name; noble; my need, a knight
To combat for my sister, Lyonors,
A lady of high lineage, of great lands,
And comely, yea, and comelier than myself.

She lives in Castle Perilous: a river
Runs in three loops about her living-place;
And o'er it are three passings, and three knights
Defend the passings, brethren, and a fourth,
And of that four the mightiest, holds her stay'd
In her own castle, and so besieges her
To break her will, and make her wed with him;
And but delays his purport till thou send
To do the battle with him thy chief man
Sir Lancelot, whom he trusts to overthrow;
Then wed, with glory: but she will not wed
Save whom she loveth, or a holy life.
Now therefore have I come for Lancelot.'

Then Arthur mindful of Sir Gareth ask'd:
'Damsel, ye know this Order lives to crush
All wrongers of the realm. But say, these four,
Who be they? What the fashion of the men?'

'They be of foolish fashion, O Sir King,
The fashion of that old knight-errantry
Who ride abroad, and do but what they will;
Courteous or bestial from the moment, such
As have nor law nor king; and three of these
Proud in their fantasy call themselves the Day,
Morning-Star, and Noon-Sun, and Evening-Star,
Being strong fools; and never a whit more wise
The fourth, who alway rideth arm'd in black,
A huge man-beast of boundless savagery.
He names himself the Night and oftener Death,
And wears a helmet mounted with a skull,
And bears a skeleton figured on his arms,
To show that who may slay or scape the three,
Slain by himself, shall enter endless night.

And all these four be fools, but mighty men,
And therefore am I come for Lancelot.'

Hereat Sir Gareth call'd from where he rose, 63
A head with kindling eyes above the throng,
'A boon, Sir King — this quest!' then — for he mark'd
Kay near him groaning like a wounded bull —
'Yea, King, thou knowest thy kitchen-knave am I,
And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks am I,
And I can topple over a hundred such.
Thy promise, King,' and Arthur glancing at him,
Brought down a momentary brow. 'Rough, sudden,
And pardonable, worthy to be knight —
Go therefore,' and all hearers were amazed. 64

But on the damsel's forehead shame, pride, wrath
Slew the may-white: she lifted either arm,
'Fie on thee, King! I ask'd for thy chief knight,
And thou hast given me but a kitchen-knave.'
Then ere a man in hall could stay her, turn'd,
Fled down the lane of access to the King,
Took horse, descended the slope street, and past
The weird white gate, and paused without, beside
The field of tourney, murmuring 'kitchen-knave!'

Now two great entries open'd from the hall, 65
At one end one that gave upon a range
Of level pavement where the King would pace
At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;
And down from this a lordly stairway sloped
Till lost in blowing trees and tops of towers;
And out by this main doorway past the King.
But one was counter to the hearth, and rose
High that the highest-crested helm could ride

Therethro' nor graze; and by this entry fled
The damsel in her wrath, and on to this
Sir Gareth strode, and saw without the door
King Arthur's gift, the worth of half a town,
A war-horse of the best, and near it stood
The two that out of north had follow'd him.
This bare a maiden shield, a casque; that held
The horse, the spear; whereat Sir Gareth loosed
A cloak that dropt from collar-bone to heel,
A cloth of roughest web, and cast it down,
And from it, like a fuel-smother'd fire
That lookt half-dead, brake bright, and flash'd as those
Dull-coated things, that making slide apart
Their dusk wing-cases, all beneath there burns
A jewell'd harness, ere they pass and fly.
So Gareth ere he parted flash'd in arms.
Then as he donn'd the helm, and took the shield
And mounted horse and graspt a spear, of grain
Storm-strengthen'd on a windy site, and tipt
With trenchant steel, around him slowly prest
The people, while from out of kitchen came
The thralls in throng, and seeing who had work'd
Lustier than any, and whom they could but love,
Mounted in arms, threw up their caps and cried,
'God bless the King, and all his fellowship!'
And on thro' lanes of shouting Gareth rode
Down the slope street, and past without the gate.

So Gareth past with joy; but as the cur
Pluckt from the cur he fights with, ere his cause
Be cool'd by fighting, follows, being named,
His owner, but remembers all, and growls
Remembering, so Sir Kay beside the door
Mutter'd in scorn of Gareth whom he used
To harry and hustle.

'Bound upon a quest
With horse and arms — the King hath past his time —
My scullion knave! Thralls, to your work again,
For an your fire be low ye kindle mine!
Will there be dawn in West and eve in East?
Begone! — my knave! — belike and like enow
Some old head-blow not heeded in his youth
So shook his wits they wander in his prime —
Crazed! How the villain lifted up his voice,
Nor shamed to bawl himself a kitchen-knave!
Tut, he was tame and meek enow with me,
Till peacock'd up with Lancelot's noticing.
Well — I will after my loud knave, and learn
Whether he know me for his master yet.
Out of the smoke he came, and so my lance
Hold, by God's grace, he shall into the mire —
Thence, if the King awaken from his craze,
Into the smoke again.'

But Lancelot said:
'Kay, wherefore wilt thou go against the King,
For that did never he whereon ye rail,
But ever meekly served the King in thee?
Abide: take counsel; for this lad is great
And lusty, and knowing both of lance and sword.'
'Tut, tell not me,' said Kay, 'ye are overfine
To mar stout knaves with foolish courtesies:'
Then mounted, on thro' silent faces rode
Down the slope city, and out beyond the gate.

But by the field of tourney lingering yet
Mutter'd the damsel: 'Wherefore did the King
Scorn me? for, were Sir Lancelot lackt, at least
He might have yielded to me one of those

Who tilt for lady's love and glory here,
Rather than — O sweet heaven! O fie upon him! —
His kitchen-knave.'

To whom Sir Gareth drew —
And there were none but few goodlier than he —
Shining in arms, 'Damsel, the quest is mine.
Lead, and I follow.' She thereat, as one
That smells a foul-flesh'd agaric in the holt,
And deems it carrion of some woodland thing,
Or shrew, or weasel, nipt her slender nose
With petulant thumb and finger, shrilling, 'Hence!
Avoid, thou smellest all of kitchen-grease.
And look who comes behind;' for there was Kay.
'Knowest thou not me? thy master? I am Kay.
We lack thee by the hearth.'

And Gareth to him,
'Master no more! too well I know thee, ay —
The most ungentle knight in Arthur's hall.'
'Have at thee then,' said Kay: they shock'd, and Kay
Fell shoulder-slipt, and Gareth cried again,
'Lead, and I follow,' and fast away she fled.

But after sod and shingle ceased to fly
Behind her, and the heart of her good horse
Was nigh to burst with violence of the beat,
Perforce she stay'd, and overtaken spoke:

'What doest thou, scullion, in my fellowship?
Deem'st thou that I accept thee aught the more
Or love thee better, that by some device
Full cowardly, or by mere unhappiness,
Thou hast overthrown and slain thy master — thou! —

Dish-washer and broach-turner, loon! — to me
Thou smellest all of kitchen as before.'

'Damsel,' Sir Gareth answer'd gently, 'say
Whate'er ye will, but whatsoe'er ye say,
Cleave not till I finish this fair quest,
Or die therefore.'

'Ay, wilt thou finish it?
Sweet lord, how like a noble knight he talks!
The listening rogue hath caught the manner of it.
But, knave, anon thou shalt be met with, knave,
And then by such a one that thou for all
The kitchen brewis that was ever supt
Shalt not once dare to look him in the face.'

'I shall assay,' said Gareth with a smile
That madden'd her, and away she flash'd again
Down the long avenues of a boundless wood,
And Gareth following was again beknaved:

'Sir Kitchen-knave, I have miss'd the only way
Where Arthur's men are set along the wood;
The wood is nigh as full of thieves as leaves:
If both be slain, I am rid of thee; but yet,
Sir Scullion, canst thou use that spit of thine?
Fight, an thou canst: I have miss'd the only way.'

So till the dusk that follow'd evensong
Rode on the two, reviler and reviled;
Then after one long slope was mounted, saw,
Bowl-shaped, thro' tops of many thousand pines
A gloomy-gladed hollow slowly sink
To westward — in the deeps whereof a mere,

Round as the red eye of an eagle-owl,
Under the half-dead sunset glared; and shouts
Ascended, and there brake a servingman
Flying from out of the black wood, and crying,
'They have bound my lord to cast him in the mere.'
Then Gareth, 'Bound am I to right the wrong'd,
But straitlier bound am I to bide with thee.'
And when the damsel spake contemptuously,
'Lead, and I follow,' Gareth cried again,
'Follow, I lead!' so down among the pines
He plunged; and there, black-shadow'd nigh the mere,
And mid-thigh-deep in bulrushes and reed,
Saw six tall men haling a seventh along,
A stone about his neck to drown him in it.
Three with good blows he quieted, but three
Fled thro' the pines; and Gareth loosed the stone
From off his neck, then in the mere beside
Tumbled it; oilily bubbled up the mere.
Last, Gareth loosed his bonds and on free feet
Set him, a stalwart baron, Arthur's friend.

'Well that ye came, or else these caitiff rogues
Had wreak'd themselves on me; good cause is theirs
To hate me, for my wont hath ever been
To catch my thief, and then like vermin here
Drown him, and with a stone about his neck;
And under this wan water many of them
Lie rotting, but at night let go the stone,
And rise, and flickering in a grimly light
Dance on the mere. Good now, ye have saved a life
Worth somewhat as the cleanser of this wood.
And fain would I reward thee worshipfully.
What guerdon will ye?'

Gareth sharply spake:
'None! for the deed's sake have I done the deed,
In uttermost obedience to the King.
But wilt thou yield this damsel harborage?'

Whereat the baron saying, 'I well believe
You be of Arthur's Table,' a light laugh
Broke from Lynette: 'Ay, truly of a truth,
And in a sort, being Arthur's kitchen-knave!—
But deem not I accept thee aught the more,
Scullion, for running sharply with thy spit
Down on a rout of craven foresters.
A thresher with his flail had scatter'd them.
Nay—for thou smellest of the kitchen still.
But an this lord will yield us harborage,
Well.'

So she spake. A league beyond the wood,
All in a full-fair manor and a rich,
His towers, where that day a feast had been
Held in high hall, and many a viand left,
And many a costly cate, received the three.
And there they placed a peacock in his pride
Before the damsel, and the baron set
Gareth beside her, but at once she rose.

'Meseems, that here is much discourtesy,
Setting this knave, Lord Baron, at my side.
Hear me—this morn I stood in Arthur's hall,
And pray'd the King would grant me Lancelot
To fight the brotherhood of Day and Night—
The last a monster unsubduable
Of any save of him for whom I call'd—
Suddenly bawls this frontless kitchen-knave,

The quest is mine; thy kitchen-knave am I,
And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks am I."
Then Arthur all at once gone mad replies,
"Go therefore," and so gives the quest to him —
Him — here — a villain fitter to stick swine
Than ride abroad redressing women's wrong,
Or sit beside a noble gentlewoman.'

Then half-ashamed and part-amazed, the lord
Now look'd at one and now at other, left
The damsel by the peacock in his pride,
And, seating Gareth at another board,
Sat down beside him, ate and then began:

'Friend, whether thou be kitchen-knave, or not,
Or whether it be the maiden's fantasy,
And whether she be mad, or else the King,
Or both or neither, or thyself be mad,
I ask not: but thou strikest a strong stroke,
For strong thou art and goodly therewithal,
And saver of my life; and therefore now,
For here be mighty men to joust with, weigh
Whether thou wilt not with thy damsel back
To crave again Sir Lancelot of the King.
Thy pardon; I but speak for thine avail,
The saver of my life.'

And Gareth said,
'Full pardon, but I follow up the quest,
Despite of Day and Night and Death and Hell.'

So when, next morn, the lord whose life he saved
Had, some brief space, convey'd them on their way
And left them with God-speed, Sir Gareth spake,
'Lead, and I follow.' Haughtily she replied:

'I fly no more: I allow thee for an hour.
Lion and stoat have isled together, knave,
In time of flood. Nay, furthermore, methinks
Some ruth is mine for thee. Back wilt thou, fool?
For hard by here is one will overthrow
And slay thee; then will I to court again,
And shame the King for only yielding me
My champion from the ashes of his hearth.'

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd courteously:
'Say thou thy say, and I will do my deed.
Allow me for mine hour, and thou wilt find
My fortunes all as fair as hers who lay
Among the ashes and wedded the King's son.'

Then to the shore of one of those long loops
Wherethro' the serpent river coil'd, they came.
Rough-thicketed were the banks and steep; the stream
Full, narrow; this a bridge of single arc
Took at a leap; and on the further side
Arose a silk pavilion, gay with gold
In streaks and rays, and all Lent-lily in hue,
Save that the dome was purple, and above,
Crimson, a slender banneret fluttering.
And therebefore the lawless warrior paced
Unarm'd, and calling, 'Damsel, is this he,
The champion thou hast brought from Arthur's hall?
For whom we let thee pass.' 'Nay, nay,' she said,
'Sir Morning-Star. The King in utter scorn
Of thee and thy much folly hath sent thee here
His kitchen-knave: and look thou to thyself:
See that he fall not on thee suddenly,
And slay thee unarm'd; he is not knight but knave.'

Then at his call, 'O daughters of the Dawn,
And servants of the Morning-Star, approach,
Arm me,' from out the silken curtain-folds
Bare-footed and bare-headed three fair girls
In gilt and rosy raiment came: their feet
In dewy grasses glisten'd; and the hair
All over glanced with dewdrop or with gem
Like sparkles in the stone Avanturine.
These arm'd him in blue arms, and gave a shield
Blue also, and thereon the morning star.
And Gareth silent gazed upon the knight,
Who stood a moment, ere his horse was brought,
Glorying; and in the stream beneath him shone,
Immingled with Heaven's azure waveringly,
The gay pavilion and the naked feet,
His arms, the rosy raiment, and the star.

Then she that watch'd him: 'Wherefore stare ye so?
Thou shakest in thy fear: there yet is time:
Flee down the valley before he get to horse.
Who will cry shame? Thou art not knight but knave.'

Said Gareth: 'Damsel, whether knave or knight,
Far liefer had I fight a score of times
Than hear thee so missay me and revile.
Fair words were best for him who fights for thee;
But truly foul are better, for they send
That strength of anger thro' mine arms, I know
That I shall overthrow him.'

And he that bore
The star, when mounted, cried from o'er the bridge:
'A kitchen-knave, and sent in scorn of me!
Such fight not I, but answer scorn with scorn.

For this were shame to do him further wrong
Than set him on his feet, and take his horse
And arms, and so return him to the King.
Come, therefore, leave thy lady lightly, knave.
Avoid: for it beseemeth not a knave
To ride with such a lady.'

'Dog, thou liest!
I spring from loftier lineage than thine own.'
He spake; and all at fiery speed the two
Shock'd on the central bridge, and either spear
Bent but not brake, and either knight at once,
Hurl'd as a stone from out of a catapult
Beyond his horse's crupper and the bridge,
Fell, as if dead; but quickly rose and drew,
And Gareth lash'd so fiercely with his brand
He drave his enemy backward down the bridge,
The damsel crying, 'Well-stricken, kitchen-knave!'
Till Gareth's shield was cloven; but one stroke
Laid him that clove it grovelling on the ground.

Then cried the fallen, 'Take not my life: I yield.'
And Gareth, 'So this damsel ask it of me
Good — I accord it easily as a grace.'
She reddening, 'Insolent scullion! I of thee?
I bound to thee for any favor ask'd!'
'Then shall he die.' And Gareth there unlaced
His helmet as to slay him, but she shriek'd,
'Be not so hardy, scullion, as to slay
One nobler than thyself.' 'Damsel, thy charge
Is an abounding pleasure to me. Knight,
Thy life is thine at her command. Arise
And quickly pass to Arthur's hall, and say
His kitchen-knave hath sent thee. See thou crave

His pardon for thy breaking of his laws.
Myself when I return will plead for thee.
Thy shield is mine — farewell ; and, damsel, thou,
Lead, and I follow.'

And fast away she fled ;
Then when he came upon her, spake : 'Methought,
Knave, when I watch'd thee striking on the bridge,
The savor of thy kitchen came upon me
A little faintlier : but the wind hath changed ;
I scent it twenty-fold.' And then she sang, 97a
'"O morning star" — not that tall felon there
Whom thou, by sorcery or unhappiness
Or some device, hast foully overthrown, —
"O morning star that smilest in the blue,
O star, my morning dream hath proven true,
Smile sweetly, thou ! my love hath smiled on me."

'But thou begone, take counsel, and away,
For hard by here is one that guards a ford —
The second brother in their fool's parable —
Will pay thee all thy wages, and to boot. 98a
Care not for shame : thou art not knight but knave.'

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd, laughingly :
'Parables ? Hear a parable of the knave.
When I was kitchen-knave among the rest,
Fierce was the hearth, and one of my co-mates
Own'd a rough dog, to whom he cast his coat,
"Guard it," and there was none to meddle with it.
And such a coat art thou, and thee the King
Gave me to guard, and such a dog am I,
To worry, and not to flee — and — knight or knave — 99c
The knave that doth thee service as full knight

Is all as good, meseems, as any knight
Toward thy sister's freeing.'

'Ay, Sir Knave!
Ay, knave, because thou strikest as a knight,
Being but knave, I hate thee all the more.'

'Fair damsel, you should worship me the more,
That, being but knave, I throw thine enemies.'

'Ay, ay,' she said, 'but thou shalt meet thy match.'

So when they touch'd the second river-loop,
Huge on a huge red horse, and all in mail
Burnish'd to blinding, shone the Noonday Sun
Beyond a raging shallow. As if the flower
That blows a globe of after arrowlets
Ten-thousand-fold had grown, flash'd the fierce shield,
All sun; and Gareth's eyes had flying blots
Before them when he turn'd from watching him.
He from beyond the roaring shallow roar'd,
'What doest thou, brother, in my marches here?'
And she athwart the shallow shrill'd again,
'Here is a kitchen-knave from Arthur's hall
Hath overthrown thy brother, and hath his arms.'
'Ugh!' cried the Sun, and, vizoring up a red
And cipher face of rounded foolishness,
Push'd horse across the foamings of the ford,
Whom Gareth met mid-stream: no room was there
For lance or tourney-skill: four strokes they struck
With sword, and these were mighty; the new knight
Had fear he might be shamed; but as the Sun
Heaved up a ponderous arm to strike the fifth,
The hoof of his horse slipt in the stream, the stream
Descended, and the Sun was wash'd away.

Then Gareth laid his lance athwart the ford;
So drew him home; but he that fought no more,
As being all bone-batter'd on the rock,
Yielded; and Gareth sent him to the King.
'Myself when I return will plead for thee.
Lead, and I follow.' Quietly she led.
'Hath not the good wind, damsel, changed again?
'Nay, not a point; nor art thou victor here.
There lies a ridge of slate across the ford;
His horse thereon stumbled — ay, for I saw it.

'"O sun" — not this strong fool whom thou, Sir Knave,
Hast overthrown thro' mere unhappiness —
"O sun, that wakenest all to bliss or pain,
O moon, that layest all to sleep again,
Shine sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me."

'What knowest thou of love-song or of love?
Nay, nay, God wot, so thou wert nobly born,
Thou hast a pleasant presence. Yea, perchance, —

'"O dewy flowers that open to the sun,
O dewy flowers that close when day is done,
Blow sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me."

'What knowest thou of flowers, except, belike,
To garnish meats with? hath not our good King
Who lent me thee, the flower of kitchendom,
A foolish love for flowers? what stick ye round
The pasty? wherewithal deck the boar's head?
Flowers? nay, the boar hath rosemaries and bay.

'"O birds that warble to the morning sky,
O birds that warble as the day goes by,
Sing sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me."

'What knowest thou of birds, lark, mavis, merle,
Linnet? what dream ye when they utter forth
May-music growing with the growing light,
Their sweet sun-worship? these be for the snare —
So runs thy fancy — these be for the spit,
Larding and basting. See thou have not now
Larded thy last, except thou turn and fly.
There stands the third fool of their allegory.'

For there beyond a bridge of treble bow, 2000
All in a rose-red from the west, and all
Naked it seem'd, and glowing in the broad
Deep-dimpled current underneath, the knight
That named himself the Star of Evening stood.

And Gareth, 'Wherefore waits the madman there
Naked in open dayshine?' 'Nay,' she cried,
'Not naked, only wrapt in harden'd skins
That fit him like his own; and so ye cleave
His armor off him, these will turn the blade.'

Then the third brother shouted o'er the bridge, 2010
'O brother-star, why shine ye here so low?
Thy ward is higher up: but have ye slain
The damsel's champion?' and the damsel cried:

'No star of thine, but shot from Arthur's heaven
With all disaster unto thine and thee!
For both thy younger brethren have gone down
Before this youth; and so wilt thou, Sir Star;
Art thou not old?'

'Old, damsel, old and hard,
Old, with the might and breath of twenty boys.'

Said Gareth, 'Old, and over-bold in brag!
But that same strength which threw the Morning Star
Can throw the Evening.'

Then that other blew
A hard and deadly note upon the horn.
'Approach and arm me!' With slow steps from out
An old storm-beaten, russet, many-stain'd
Pavilion, forth a grizzled damsel came,
And arm'd him in old arms, and brought a helm
With but a drying evergreen for crest,
And gave a shield whereon the star of even
Half-tarnish'd and half-bright, his emblem, shone.
But when it glitter'd o'er the saddle-bow,
They madly hurl'd together on the bridge;
And Gareth overthrew him, lighted, drew,
There met him drawn, and overthrew him again,
But up like fire he started: and as oft
As Gareth brought him grovelling on his knees,
So many a time he vaulted up again;
Till Gareth panted hard, and his great heart,
Foredooming all his trouble was in vain,
Labor'd within him, for he seem'd as one
That all in later, sadder age begins
To war against ill uses of a life,
But these from all his life arise, and cry,
'Thou hast made us lords, and canst not put us down!'
He half despairs; so Gareth seem'd to strike
Vainly, the damsel clamoring all the while,
'Well done, knave-knight, well stricken, O good knight-knave —
O knave, as noble as any of all the knights —
Shame me not, shame me not. I have prophesied —
Strike, thou art worthy of the Table Round —

His arms are old, he trusts the harden'd skin —
Strike — strike — the wind will never change again.'
And Gareth hearing ever stronglier smote,
And hew'd great pieces of his armor off him,
But lash'd in vain against the harden'd skin,
And could not wholly bring him under, more
Than loud Southwesterns, rolling ridge on ridge,
The buoy that rides at sea, and dips and springs
For ever; till at length Sir Gareth's brand
Clash'd his, and brake it utterly to the hilt.
'I have thee now;' but forth that other sprang,
And, all unknightlike, writhed his wiry arms
Around him, till he felt, despite his mail,
Strangled, but straining even his uttermost
Cast, and so hurl'd him headlong o'er the bridge
Down to the river, sink or swim, and cried,
'Lead, and I follow.'

But the damsel said:
'I lead no longer; ride thou at my side;
Thou art the kingliest of all kitchen-knaves.

'"O trefoil, sparkling on the rainy plain,
O rainbow with three colors after rain,
Shine sweetly: thrice my love hath smiled on me."

'Sir, — and, good faith, I fain had added — Knight,
But that I heard thee call thyself a knave, —
Shamed am I that I so rebuked, reviled,
Missaid thee; noble I am; and thought the King
Scorn'd me and mine; and now thy pardon, friend,
For thou hast ever answer'd courteously,
And wholly bold thou art, and meek withal
As any of Arthur's best, but, being knave,
Hast mazed my wit: I marvel what thou art.'

'Damsel,' he said, 'you be not all to blame,
Saving that you mistrusted our good King
Would handle scorn, or yield you, asking, one
Not fit to cope your quest. You said your say;
Mine answer was my deed. Good sooth! I hold
He scarce is knight, yea but half-man, nor meet
To fight for gentle damsel, he, who lets
His heart be stirr'd with any foolish heat
At any gentle damsel's waywardness.
Shamed? care not! thy foul sayings fought for me:
And seeing now thy words are fair, methinks
There rides no knight, not Lancelot, his great self,
Hath force to quell me.'

Nigh upon that hour
When the lone hern forgets his melancholy,
Lets down his other leg, and stretching dreams
Of goodly supper in the distant pool,
Then turn'd the noble damsel smiling at him,
And told him of a cavern hard at hand,
Where bread and baken meats and good red wine
Of Southland, which the Lady Lyonors
Had sent her coming champion, waited him.

Anon they past a narrow valley wherein
Were slabs of rock with figures, knights on horse
Sculptured, and deckt in slowly-waning hues.
'Sir Knave, my knight, a hermit once was here,
Whose holy hand hath fashion'd on the rock
The war of Time against the soul of man.
And yon four fools have suck'd their allegory
From these damp walls, and taken but the form.
Know ye not these?' and Gareth lookt and read —
In letters like to those the vexillary

Hath left crag-carven o'er the streaming Gelt —
'PHOSPHORUS,' then 'MERIDIES,' — 'HESPERUS' —
'NOX' — 'MORS,' beneath five figures, armed men,
Slab after slab, their faces forward all,
And running down the Soul, a shape that fled
With broken wings, torn raiment, and loose hair,
For help and shelter to the hermit's cave.
'Follow the faces, and we find it. Look,
Who comes behind?'

For one — delay'd at first
Thro' helping back the dislocated Kay
To Camelot, then by what thereafter chanced,
The damsel's headlong error thro' the wood —
Sir Lancelot, having swum the river-loops —
His blue shield-lions cover'd — softly drew
Behind the twain, and when he saw the star
Gleam, on Sir Gareth's turning to him, cried,
'Stay, felon knight, I avenge me for my friend.'
And Gareth crying prick'd against the cry;
But when they closed — in a moment — at one touch
Of that skill'd spear, the wonder of the world —
Went sliding down so easily, and fell,
That when he found the grass within his hands
He laugh'd; the laughter jarr'd upon Lynette:
Harshly she ask'd him, 'Shamed and overthrown,
And tumbled back into the kitchen-knave,
Why laugh ye? that ye blew your boast in vain?'
'Nay, noble damsel, but that I, the son
Of old King Lot and good Queen Bellicent,
And victor of the bridges and the ford,
And knight of Arthur, here lie thrown by whom
I know not, all thro' mere unhappiness —
Device and sorcery and unhappiness —

Out, sword; we are thrown!' And Lancelot answer'd:
'Prince,
O Gareth — thro' the mere unhappiness
Of one who came to help thee, not to harm,
Lancelot, and all as glad to find thee whole
As on the day when Arthur knighted him.'

Then Gareth: 'Thou — Lancelot! — thine the hand
That threw me? An some chance to mar the boast
Thy brethren of thee make — which could not chance —
Had sent thee down before a lesser spear,
Shamed had I been, and sad — O Lancelot — thou!'

Whereat the maiden, petulant: 'Lancelot,
Why came ye not, when call'd? and wherefore now
Come ye, not call'd? I gloried in my knave,
Who being still rebuked would answer still
Courteous as any knight — but now, if knight,
The marvel dies, and leaves me fool'd and trick'd,
And only wondering wherefore play'd upon;
And doubtful whether I and mine be scorn'd.
Where should be truth if not in Arthur's hall,
In Arthur's presence? Knight, knave, prince and fool,
I hate thee and forever.'

And Lancelot said:
'Blessed be thou, Sir Gareth! knight art thou
To the King's best wish. O damsel, be you wise,
To call him shamed who is but overthrown?
Thrown have I been, nor once, but many a time.
Victor from vanquish'd issues at the last,
And overthrower from being overthrown.
With sword we have not striven; and thy good horse
And thou are weary; yet not less I felt

Thy manhood thro' that wearied lance of thine.
Well hast thou done; for all the stream is freed,
And thou hast wreak'd his justice on his foes,
And when reviled hast answer'd graciously,
And makest merry when overthrown. Prince, knight,
Hail, knight and prince, and of our Table Round!'

And then when turning to Lynette he told
The tale of Gareth, petulantly she said:
'Ay, well — ay, well — for worse than being fool'd
Of others, is to fool one's self. A cave,
Sir Lancelot, is hard by, with meats and drinks
And forage for the horse, and flint for fire.
But all about it flies a honeysuckle.
Seek, till we find.' And when they sought and found,
Sir Gareth drank and ate, and all his life
Past into sleep; on whom the maiden gazed:
'Sound sleep be thine! sound cause to sleep hast thou.
Wake lusty! Seem I not as tender to him
As any mother? Ay, but such a one
As all day long hath rated at her child,
And vext his day, but blesses him asleep —
Good lord, how sweetly smells the honeysuckle
In the hush'd night, as if the world were one
Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness!
O Lancelot, Lancelot,' — and she clapt her hands —
'Full merry am I to find my goodly knave
Is knight and noble. See now, sworn have I,
Else yon black felon had not let me pass,
To bring thee back to do the battle with him.
Thus an thou goest, he will fight thee first;
Who doubts thee victor? so will my knight-knave
Miss the full flower of this accomplishment.'

Said Lancelot: 'Peradventure he you name
May know my shield. Let Gareth, an he will,
Change his for mine, and take my charger, fresh,
Not to be spurr'd, loving the battle as well
As he that rides him.' 'Lancelot-like,' she said,
'Courteous in this, Lord Lancelot, as in all.'

And Gareth, wakening, fiercely clutch'd the shield:
'Ramp, ye lance-splintering lions, on whom all spears
Are rotten sticks! ye seem agape to roar!
Yea, ramp and roar at leaving of your lord!—
Care not, good beasts, so well I care for you.
O noble Lancelot, from my hold on these
Streams virtue — fire — thro' one that will not shame
Even the shadow of Lancelot under shield.
Hence: let us go.'

Silent the silent field
They traversed. Arthur's Harp tho' summer-wan,
In counter motion to the clouds, allured
The glance of Gareth dreaming on his liege.
A star shot: 'Lo,' said Gareth, 'the foe falls!'
An owl whoopt: 'Hark the victor pealing there!'
Suddenly she that rode upon his left
Clung to the shield that Lancelot lent him, crying:
'Yield, yield him this again; 'tis he must fight:
I curse the tongue that all thro' yesterday
Reviled thee, and hath wrought on Lancelot now
To lend thee horse and shield: wonders ye have done;
Miracles ye cannot: here is glory enow
In having flung the three: I see thee maim'd,
Mangled: I swear thou canst not fling the fourth.'

'And wherefore, damsel? tell me all ye know.
You cannot scare me; nor rough face, or voice,

Brute bulk of limb, or boundless savagery
Appal me from the quest.'

'Nay, prince,' she cried,
'God wot, I never look'd upon the face,
Seeing he never rides abroad by day;
But watch'd him have I like a phantom pass
Chilling the night: nor have I heard the voice.
Always he made his mouthpiece of a page
Who came and went, and still reported him
As closing in himself the strength of ten,
And when his anger tare him, massacring
Man, woman, lad, and girl — yea, the soft babe!
Some hold that he hath swallow'd infant flesh,
Monster! O prince, I went for Lancelot first,
The quest is Lancelot's: give him back the shield.'

Said Gareth laughing, 'An he fight for this,
Belike he wins it as the better man:
Thus — and not else!'

But Lancelot on him urged
All the devisings of their chivalry
When one might meet a mightier than himself;
How best to manage horse, lance, sword, and shield,
And so fill up the gap where force might fail
With skill and fineness. Instant were his words.

Then Gareth: 'Here be rules. I know but one —
To dash against mine enemy and to win.
Yet have I watch'd thee victor in the joust,
And seen thy way.' 'Heaven help thee!' sigh'd Lynette.

Then for a space, and under cloud that grew
To thunder-gloom palling all stars, they rode

In converse till she made her palfrey halt,
Lifted an arm, and softly whisper'd, 'There.'
And all the three were silent seeing, pitch'd
Beside the Castle Perilous on flat field,
A huge pavilion like a mountain peak
Sunder the glooming crimson on the marge,
Black, with black banner, and a long black horn
Beside it hanging; which Sir Gareth graspt,
And so, before the two could hinder him,
Sent all his heart and breath thro' all the horn.
Echo'd the walls; a light twinkled; anon
Came lights and lights, and once again he blew;
Whereon were hollow tramplings up and down
And muffled voices heard, and shadows past;
Till high above him, circled with her maids,
The Lady Lyonors at a window stood,
Beautiful among lights, and waving to him
White hands and courtesy; but when the prince
Three times had blown — after long hush — at last —
The huge pavilion slowly yielded up,
Thro' those black foldings, that which housed therein.
High on a night-black horse, in night-black arms,
With white breast-bone, and barren ribs of Death,
And crown'd with fleshless laughter — some ten steps —
In the half-light — thro' the dim dawn — advanced
The monster, and then paused, and spake no word.

But Gareth spake and all indignantly:
'Fool, for thou hast, men say, the strength of ten,
Canst thou not trust the limbs thy God hath given,
But must, to make the terror of thee more,
Trick thyself out in ghastly imageries
Of that which Life hath done with, and the clod,
Less dull than thou, will hide with mantling flowers

As if for pity?' But he spake no word;
Which set the horror higher: a maiden swoon'd;
The Lady Lyonors wrung her hands and wept,
As doom'd to be the bride of Night and Death;
Sir Gareth's head prickled beneath his helm;
And even Sir Lancelot thro' his warm blood felt
Ice strike, and all that mark'd him were aghast.

At once Sir Lancelot's charger fiercely neigh'd,
And Death's dark war-horse bounded forward with him.
Then those that did not blink the terror saw
That Death was cast to ground, and slowly rose.
But with one stroke Sir Gareth split the skull.
Half fell to right and half to left and lay.
Then with a stronger buffet he clove the helm
As throughly as the skull; and out from this
Issued the bright face of a blooming boy
Fresh as a flower new-born, and crying, 'Knight,
Slay me not: my three brethren bade me do it,
To make a horror all about the house,
And stay the world from Lady Lyonors;
They never dream'd the passes would be past.'
Answer'd Sir Gareth graciously to one
Not many a moon his younger, 'My fair child,
What madness made thee challenge the chief knight
Of Arthur's hall?' 'Fair Sir, they bade me do it.
They hate the King and Lancelot, the King's friend;
They hoped to slay him somewhere on the stream,
They never dream'd the passes could be past.'

Then sprang the happier day from underground;
And Lady Lyonors and her house, with dance
And revel and song, made merry over Death,
As being after all their foolish fears

And horrors only proven a blooming boy.
So large mirth lived, and Gareth won the quest.

And he that told the tale in older times
Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors,
But he that told it later says Lynette.

THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT.

THE brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur's court,
A tributary prince of Devon, one
Of that great Order of the Table Round,
Had married Enid, Yniol's only child,
And loved her as he loved the light of heaven.
And as the light of heaven varies, now
At sunrise, now at sunset, now by night
With moon and trembling stars, so loved Geraint
To make her beauty vary day by day,
In crimsons and in purples and in gems.
And Enid, but to please her husband's eye,
Who first had found and loved her in a state
Of broken fortunes, daily fronted him
In some fresh splendor; and the Queen herself,
Grateful to Prince Geraint for service done,
Loved her, and often with her own white hands
Array'd and deck'd her, as the loveliest,
Next after her own self, in all the court.
And Enid loved the Queen, and with true heart
Adored her, as the stateliest and the best
And loveliest of all women upon earth.
And seeing them so tender and so close,
Long in their common love rejoiced Geraint.
But when a rumor rose about the Queen,
Touching her guilty love for Lancelot,
Tho' yet there lived no proof, nor yet was heard
The world's loud whisper breaking into storm,

Not less Geraint believed it; and there fell
A horror on him lest his gentle wife,
Thro' that great tenderness for Guinevere,
Had suffer'd or should suffer any taint
In nature: wherefore, going to the King,
He made this pretext, that his princedom lay
Close on the borders of a territory
Wherein were bandit earls, and caitiff knights,
Assassins, and all flyers from the hand
Of Justice, and whatever loathes a law;
And therefore, till the King himself should please
To cleanse this common sewer of all his realm,
He craved a fair permission to depart,
And there defend his marches: and the King
Mused for a little on his plea, but, last,
Allowing it, the prince and Enid rode,
And fifty knights rode with them, to the shores
Of Severn, and they past to their own land;
Where, thinking that, if ever yet was wife
True to her lord, mine shall be so to me,
He compass'd her with sweet observances
And worship, never leaving her, and grew
Forgetful of his promise to the King,
Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,
Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,
Forgetful of his glory and his name,
Forgetful of his princedom and its cares.
And this forgetfulness was hateful to her.
And by and by the people, when they met
In twos and threes, or fuller companies,
Began to scoff and jeer and babble of him
As of a prince whose manhood was all gone,
And molten down in mere uxoriousness.
And this she gather'd from the people's eyes;

This too the women who attired her head,
To please her, dwelling on his boundless love,
Told Enid, and they sadden'd her the more:
And day by day she thought to tell Geraint,
But could not out of bashful delicacy;
While he, that watch'd her sadden, was the more
Suspicious that her nature had a taint.

At last, it chanced that on a summer morn —
They sleeping each by either — the new sun
Beat thro' the blindless casement of the room,
And heated the strong warrior in his dreams;
Who, moving, cast the coverlet aside,
And bared the knotted column of his throat,
The massive square of his heroic breast,
And arms on which the standing muscle sloped,
As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,
Running too vehemently to break upon it.
And Enid woke and sat beside the couch,
Admiring him, and thought within herself,
Was ever man so grandly made as he?
Then, like a shadow, past the people's talk
And accusation of uxoriousness
Across her mind, and, bowing over him,
Low to her own heart piteously she said:

'O noble breast and all-puissant arms,
Am I the cause, I the poor cause that men
Reproach you, saying all your force is gone?
I *am* the cause, because I dare not speak
And tell him what I think and what they say.
And yet I hate that he should linger here;
I cannot love my lord and not his name.
Far liefer had I gird his harness on him,

And ride with him to battle and stand by,
And watch his mightful hand striking great blows
At caitiffs and at wrongers of the world.
Far better were I laid in the dark earth,
Not hearing any more his noble voice,
Not to be folded more in these dear arms,
And darken'd from the high light in his eyes,
Than that my lord thro' me should suffer shame.
Am I so bold, and could I so stand by,
And see my dear lord wounded in the strife,
Or maybe pierced to death before mine eyes,
And yet not dare to tell him what I think,
And how men slur him, saying all his force
Is melted into mere effeminacy?
O me, I fear that I am no true wife!'

Half inwardly, half audibly she spoke,
And the strong passion in her made her weep
True tears upon his broad and naked breast,
And these awoke him, and by great mischance
He heard but fragments of her later words,
And that she fear'd she was not a true wife.
And then he thought, 'In spite of all my care,
For all my pains, poor man, for all my pains,
She is not faithful to me, and I see her
Weeping for some gay knight in Arthur's hall.'
Then, tho' he loved and reverenced her too much
To dream she could be guilty of foul act,
Right thro' his manful breast darted the pang
That makes a man, in the sweet face of her
Whom he loves most, lonely and miserable.
At this he hurl'd his huge limbs out of bed,
And shook his drowsy squire awake and cried,
'My charger and her palfrey;' then to her,

'I will ride forth into the wilderness;
For, tho' it seems my spurs are yet to win,
I have not fallen so low as some would wish.
And thou, put on thy worst and meanest dress
And ride with me.' And Enid ask'd, amazed,
'If Enid errs, let Enid learn her fault.'
But he, 'I charge thee, ask not, but obey.'
Then she bethought her of a faded silk,
A faded mantle and a faded veil,
And moving toward a cedarn cabinet,
Wherein she kept them folded reverently
With sprigs of summer laid between the folds,
She took them, and array'd herself therein,
Remembering when first he came on her
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,
And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey to her, as himself
Had told her, and their coming to the court.

For Arthur on the Whitsuntide before
Held court at old Caerleon upon Usk.
There on a day, he sitting high in hall,
Before him came a forester of Dean,
Wet from the woods, with notice of a hart
Taller than all his fellows, milky-white,
First seen that day: these things he told the King.
Then the good King gave order to let blow
His horns for hunting on the morrow morn,
And when the Queen petition'd for his leave
To see the hunt, allow'd it easily.
So with the morning all the court were gone.
But Guinevere lay late into the morn,
Lost in sweet dreams, and dreaming of her love
For Lancelot, and forgetful of the hunt,

But rose at last, a single maiden with her,
Took horse, and forded Usk, and gain'd the wood;
There, on a little knoll beside it, stay'd
Waiting to hear the hounds, but heard instead
A sudden sound of hoofs, for Prince Geraint,
Late also, wearing neither hunting-dress
Nor weapon save a golden-hilted brand,
Came quickly flashing thro' the shallow ford
Behind them, and so gallop'd up the knoll.
A purple scarf, at either end whereof
There swung an apple of the purest gold,
Sway'd round about him, as he gallop'd up
To join them, glancing like a dragon-fly
In summer suit and silks of holiday.
Low bow'd the tributary prince, and she,
Sweetly and statelily, and with all grace
Of womanhood and queenhood, answer'd him:
'Late, late, Sir Prince,' she said, 'later than we!'
'Yea, noble Queen,' he answer'd, 'and so late
That I but come like you to see the hunt,
Not join it.' 'Therefore wait with me,' she said;
'For on this little knoll, if anywhere,
There is good chance that we shall hear the hounds:
Here often they break covert at our feet.'

And while they listen'd for the distant hunt,
And chiefly for the baying of Cavall,
King Arthur's hound of deepest mouth, there rode
Full slowly by a knight, lady, and dwarf;
Whereof the dwarf lagg'd latest, and the knight
Had vizor up, and show'd a youthful face,
Imperious, and of haughtiest lineaments.
And Guinevere, not mindful of his face
In the King's hall, desired his name, and sent

Her maiden to demand it of the dwarf;
Who being vicious, old, and irritable,
And doubling all his master's vice of pride,
Made answer sharply that she should not know.
'Then will I ask it of himself,' she said.
'Nay, by my faith, thou shalt not,' cried the dwarf;
'Thou art not worthy even to speak of him;'
And when she put her horse toward the knight,
Struck at her with his whip, and she return'd
Indignant to the Queen; whereat Geraint
Exclaiming, 'Surely I will learn the name,'
Made sharply to the dwarf, and ask'd it of him,
Who answer'd as before; and when the prince
Had put his horse in motion toward the knight,
Struck at him with his whip, and cut his cheek.
The prince's blood spirted upon the scarf,
Dyeing it; and his quick, instinctive hand
Caught at the hilt, as to abolish him:
But he, from his exceeding manfulness
And pure nobility of temperament,
Wroth to be wroth at such a worm, refrain'd
From even a word, and so returning said:

'I will avenge this insult, noble Queen,
Done in your maiden's person to yourself;
And I will track this vermin to their earths:
For tho' I ride unarm'd, I do not doubt
To find, at some place I shall come at, arms
On loan, or else for pledge; and, being found,
Then will I fight him, and will break his pride,
And on the third day will again be here,
So that I be not fallen in fight. Farewell.'

'Farewell, fair prince,' answer'd the stately Queen.
'Be prosperous in this journey, as in all;

And may you light on all things that you love,
And live to wed with her whom first you love:
But ere you wed with any, bring your bride,
And I, were she the daughter of a king,
Yea, tho' she were a beggar from the hedge,
Will clothe her for her bridals like the sun.'

And Prince Geraint, now thinking that he heard
The noble hart at bay, now the far horn,
A little vext at losing of the hunt,
A little at the vile occasion, rode,
By ups and downs, thro' many a grassy glade
And valley, with fixt eye following the three.
At last they issued from the world of wood,
And climb'd upon a fair and even ridge,
And show'd themselves against the sky, and sank.
And thither came Geraint, and underneath
Beheld the long street of a little town
In a long valley, on one side whereof,
White from the mason's hand, a fortress rose;
And on one side a castle in decay,
Beyond a bridge that spann'd a dry ravine:
And out of town and valley came a noise
As of a broad brook o'er a shingly bed
Brawling, or like a clamor of the rooks
At distance, ere they settle for the night.

And onward to the fortress rode the three,
And enter'd, and were lost behind the walls.
'So,' thought Geraint, 'I have track'd him to his earth.'
And down the long street riding wearily,
Found every hostel full, and everywhere
Was hammer laid to hoof, and the hot hiss
And bustling whistle of the youth who scour'd

His master's armor; and of such a one
He ask'd, 'What means the tumult in the town?'
Who told him, scouring still, 'The sparrow-hawk!'
Then riding close behind an ancient churl,
Who, smitten by the dusty sloping beam,
Went sweating underneath a sack of corn,
Ask'd yet once more what meant the hubbub here?
Who answer'd gruffly, 'Ugh! the sparrow-hawk!'
Then riding further past an armorer's,
Who, with back turn'd, and bow'd above his work,
Sat riveting a helmet on his knee,
He put the selfsame query, but the man
Not turning round, nor looking at him, said:
'Friend, he that labors for the sparrow-hawk
Has little time for idle questioners.'
Whereat Geraint flash'd into sudden spleen:
'A thousand pips eat up your sparrow-hawk!
Tits, wrens, and all wing'd nothings peck him dead!
Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg
The murmur of the world! What is it to me?
O wretched set of sparrows, one and all,
Who pipe of nothing but of sparrow-hawks!
Speak, if ye be not like the rest, hawk-mad,
Where can I get me harborage for the night?
And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy? Speak!'
Whereat the armorer turning all amazed
And seeing one so gay in purple silks,
Came forward with the helmet yet in hand
And answer'd: 'Pardon me, O stranger knight;
We hold a tourney here to-morrow morn,
And there is scantly time for half the work.
Arms? truth! I know not: all are wanted here.
Harborage? truth, good truth, I know not, save,
It may be, at Earl Yniol's, o'er the bridge
Yonder.' He spoke and fell to work again.

Then rode Geraint, a little spleenful yet,
Across the bridge that spann'd the dry ravine.
There musing sat the hoary-headed earl —
His dress a suit of fray'd magnificence,
Once fit for feasts of ceremony — and said :
'Whither, fair son?' to whom Geraint replied,
'O friend, I seek a harborage for the night.'
Then Yniol, 'Enter therefore and partake
The slender entertainment of a house
Once rich, now poor, but ever open-door'd.'
'Thanks, venerable friend,' replied Geraint ;
'So that ye do not serve me sparrow-hawks
For supper, I will enter, I will eat
With all the passion of a twelve hours' fast.'
Then sigh'd and smiled the hoary-headed earl,
And answer'd, 'Graver cause than yours is mine
To curse this hedgerow thief, the sparrow-hawk :
But in, go in ; for save yourself desire it,
We will not touch upon him even in jest.'

Then rode Geraint into the castle court,
His charger trampling many a prickly star
Of sprouted thistle on the broken stones.
He look'd and saw that all was ruinous.
Here stood a shatter'd archway plumed with fern ;
And here had fallen a great part of a tower,
Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the cliff,
And like a crag was gay with wilding flowers :
And high above a piece of turret-stair,
Worn by the feet that now were silent, wound
Bare to the sun, and monstrous ivy-stems
Claspt the gray walls with hairy-fibred arms,
And suck'd the joining of the stones, and look'd
A knot, beneath of snakes, aloft, a grove.

And while he waited in the castle court,
The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang
Clear thro' the open casement of the hall,
Singing; and as the sweet voice of a bird,
Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,
Moves him to think what kind of bird it is
That sings so delicately clear, and make
Conjecture of the plumage and the form,
So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint;
And made him like a man abroad at morn
When first the liquid note beloved of men
Comes flying over many a windy wave
To Britain, and in April suddenly
Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with green and red,
And he suspends his converse with a friend,
Or it may be the labor of his hands,
To think or say, 'There is the nightingale:'
So fared it with Geraint, who thought and said,
'Here, by God's grace, is the one voice for me.'

It chanced the song that Enid sang was one
Of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid sang:

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud;
Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine, storm, and cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown;
With that wild wheel we go not up or down;
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

'Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands;
Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;
For man is man and master of his fate.

'Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd;
Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.'

'Hark, by the bird's song ye may learn the nest,'
Said Yniol; 'enter quickly.' Entering then,
Right o'er a mount of newly-fallen stones,
The dusky-rafter'd many-cobweb'd hall,
He found an ancient dame in dim brocade;
And near her, like a blossom vermeil-white
That lightly breaks a faded flower-sheath,
Moved the fair Enid, all in faded silk,
Her daughter. In a moment thought Geraint,
'Here, by God's rood, is the one maid for me.'
But none spake word except the hoary earl:
'Enid, the good knight's horse stands in the court;
Take him to stall, and give him corn, and then
Go to the town and buy us flesh and wine;
And we will make us merry as we may.
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.'

He spake: the prince, as Enid past him, fain
To follow, strode a stride, but Yniol caught
His purple scarf, and held, and said, 'Forbear!
Rest! the good house, tho' ruin'd, O my son,
Endures not that her guest should serve himself.'
And reverencing the custom of the house
Geraint, from utter courtesy, forebore.

So Enid took his charger to the stall,
And after went her way across the bridge,
And reach'd the town, and while the prince and earl
Yet spoke together, came again with one,
A youth that, following with a costrel, bore

The means of goodly welcome, flesh and wine.
And Enid brought sweet cakes to make them cheer,
And, in her veil enfolded, manchet bread.
And then, because their hall must also serve
For kitchen, boil'd the flesh, and spread the board,
And stood behind, and waited on the three.
And, seeing her so sweet and serviceable,
Geraint had longing in him evermore
To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb
That crost the trencher as she laid it down:
But after all had eaten, then Geraint,
For now the wine made summer in his veins,
Let his [illegible]ove in following, or rest
On [illegible]r lowly handmaid-work,
Now [illegible] there, about the dusky hall;
Then [illegible]y addrest the hoary earl:

'Fair host and earl, I pray your courtesy;
This sparrow-hawk, what is he? tell me of him.
His name? but no, good faith, I will not have it:
For if he be the knight whom late I saw
Ride into that new fortress by your town,
White from the mason's hand, then have I sworn
From his own lips to have it — I am Geraint
Of Devon — for this morning when the Queen
Sent her own maiden to demand the name,
His dwarf, a vicious under-shapen thing,
Struck at her with his whip, and she return'd
Indignant to the Queen; and then I swore
That I would track this caitiff to his hold,
And fight and break his pride, and have it of him.
And all unarm'd I rode, and thought to find
Arms in your town, where all the men are mad;
They take the rustic murmur of their bourg

For the great wave that echoes round the world;
They would not hear me speak: but if ye know
Where I can light on arms, or if yourself
Should have them, tell me, seeing I have sworn
That I will break his pride and learn his name,
Avenging this great insult done the Queen.'

Then cried Earl Yniol: 'Art thou he indeed,
Geraint, a name far-sounded among men
For noble deeds? and truly I, when first
I saw you moving by me on the bridge,
Felt ye were somewhat, yea, and by your state
And presence might have guess'd you one of those
That eat in Arthur's hall at Camelot.
Nor speak I now from foolish flattery;
For this dear child hath often heard me praise
Your feats of arms, and often when I paused
Hath ask'd again, and ever loved to hear;
So grateful is the noise of noble deeds
To noble hearts who see but acts of wrong.
O never yet had woman such a pair
Of suitors as this maiden: first Limours,
A creature wholly given to brawls and wine,
Drunk even when he woo'd; and be he dead
I know not, but he past to the wild land.
The second was your foe, the sparrow-hawk,
My curse, my nephew — I will not let his name
Slip from my lips if I can help it — he,
When I that knew him fierce and turbulent
Refused her to him, then his pride awoke;
And since the proud man often is the mean,
He sow'd a slander in the common ear,
Affirming that his father left him gold,
And in my charge, which was not render'd to him;

Bribed with large promises the men who served
About my person, the more easily
Because my means were somewhat broken into
Thro' open doors and hospitality;
Raised my own town against me in the night
Before my Enid's birthday, sack'd my house;
From mine own earldom foully ousted me;
Built that new fort to overawe my friends,
For truly there are those who love me yet;
And keeps me in this ruinous castle here,
Where doubtless he would put me soon to death
But that his pride too much despises me:
And I myself sometimes despise myself;
For I have let men be and have their way,
Am much too gentle, have not used my power;
Nor know I whether I be very base
Or very manful, whether very wise
Or very foolish; only this I know,
That whatsoever evil happen to me,
I seem to suffer nothing heart or limb,
But can endure it all most patiently.'

'Well said, true heart,' replied Geraint, 'but arms,
That if the sparrow-hawk, this nephew, fight
In next day's tourney I may break his pride.'

And Yniol answer'd: 'Arms, indeed, but old
And rusty, old and rusty, Prince Geraint,
Are mine, and therefore, at thine asking, thine.
But in this tournament can no man tilt,
Except the lady he loves best be there.
Two forks are fixt into the meadow ground,
And over these is placed a silver wand,
And over that a golden sparrow-hawk,

The prize of beauty for the fairest there.
And this, what knight soever be in field
Lays claim to for the lady at his side,
And tilts with my good nephew thereupon,
Who being apt at arms and big of bone
Has ever won it for the lady with him,
And toppling over all antagonism
Has earn'd himself the name of sparrow-hawk.
But thou, that hast no lady, canst not fight.'

To whom Geraint with eyes all bright replied,
Leaning a little toward him : 'Thy leave!
Let *me* lay lance in rest, O noble host,
For this dear child, because I never saw,
Tho' having seen all beauties of our time,
Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair.
And if I fall her name will yet remain
Untarnish'd as before ; but if I live,
So aid me Heaven when at mine uttermost
As I will make her truly my true wife!'

Then, howsoever patient, Yniol's heart
Danced in his bosom, seeing better days.
And looking round he saw not Enid there —
Who hearing her own name had stolen away —
But that old dame, to whom full tenderly
And fondling all her hand in his he said :
'Mother, a maiden is a tender thing,
And best by her that bore her understood.
Go thou to rest, but ere thou go to rest
Tell her, and prove her heart toward the prince.'

So spake the kindly-hearted earl, and she
With frequent smile and nod departing found,

Half di array'd as to her rest, the girl ;
Whom first she kiss'd on either cheek, and then
On either shining shoulder laid a hand,
And kept her off and gazed upon her face,
And told her all their converse in the hall,
Proving her heart : but never light and shade
Coursed one another more on open ground
Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and pale
Across the face of Enid hearing her ;
While slowly falling as a scale that falls,
When weight is added only grain by grain,
Sank her sweet head upon her gentle breast ;
Nor did she lift an eye nor speak a word,
Rapt in the fear and in the wonder of it :
So moving without answer to her rest
She found no rest, and ever fail'd to draw
The quiet night into her blood, but lay
Contemplating her own unworthiness ;
And when the pale and bloodless east began
To quicken to the sun, arose, and raised
Her mother too, and hand in hand they moved
Down to the meadow where the jousts were held,
And waited there for Yniol and Geraint.

And thither came the twain, and when Geraint
Beheld her first in field, awaiting him,
He felt, were she the prize of bodily force,
Himself beyond the rest pushing could move
The Chair of Idris. Yniol's rusted arms
Were on his princely person, but thro' these
Prince-like his bearing shone ; and errant knights
And ladies came, and by and by the town
Flow'd in and settling circled all the lists.
And there they fixt the forks into the ground,

And over these they placed the silver wand,
And over that the golden sparrow-hawk.
Then Yniol's nephew, after trumpet blown,
Spake to the lady with him and proclaim'd,
'Advance and take, the fairest of the fair,
What I these two years past have won for thee,
The prize of beauty.' Loudly spake the prince,
'Forbear: there is a worthier,' and the knight
With some surprise and thrice as much disdain
Turn'd, and beheld the four, and all his face
Glow'd like the heart of a great fire at Yule,
So burnt he was with passion, crying out,
'Do battle for it then,' no more; and thrice
They clash'd together, and thrice they brake their spears.
Then each, dishorsed and drawing, lash'd at each
So often and with such blows that all the crowd
Wonder'd, and now and then from distant walls
There came a clapping as of phantom hands.
So twice they fought, and twice they breathed, and still
The dew of their great labor and the blood
Of their strong bodies, flowing, drain'd their force.
But either's force was match'd till Yniol's cry,
'Remember that great insult done the Queen,'
Increased Geraint's, who heaved his blade aloft,
And crack'd the helmet thro', and bit the bone,
And fell'd him, and set foot upon his breast,
And said, 'Thy name?' To whom the fallen man
Made answer, groaning: 'Edyrn, son of Nudd!
Ashamed am I that I should tell it thee.
My pride is broken: men have seen my fall.'
'Then, Edyrn, son of Nudd,' replied Geraint,
'These two things shalt thou do, or else thou diest.
First, thou thyself, with damsel and with dwarf,
Shalt ride to Arthur's court and, coming there,

Crave pardon for that insult done the Queen,
And shalt abide her judgment on it; next,
Thou shalt give back their earldom to thy kin.
These two things shalt thou do, or thou shalt die.'
And Edyrn answer'd, 'These things will I do,
For I have never yet been overthrown,
And thou hast overthrown me, and my pride
Is broken down, for Enid sees my fall!'
And rising up he rode to Arthur's court,
And there the Queen forgave him easily.
And, being young, he changed and came to loathe
His crime of traitor, slowly drew himself
Bright from his old dark life, and fell at last
In the great battle fighting for the King.

But when the third day from the hunting-morn
Made a low splendor in the world, and wings
Moved in her ivy, Enid, for she lay
With her fair head in the dim-yellow light,
Among the dancing shadows of the birds,
Woke and bethought her of her promise given
No later than last eve to Prince Geraint —
So bent he seem'd on going the third day,
He would not leave her till her promise given —
To ride with him this morning to the court,
And there be made known to the stately Queen,
And there be wedded with all ceremony.
At this she cast her eyes upon her dress,
And thought it never yet had look'd so mean.
For as a leaf in mid-November is
To what it was in mid-October, seem'd
The dress that now she look'd on to the dress
She look'd on ere the coming of Geraint.
And still she look'd, and still the terror grew

Of that strange bright and dreadful thing, a court,
All staring at her in her faded silk;
And softly to her own sweet heart she said:

'This noble prince who won our earldom back,
So splendid in his acts and his attire,
Sweet heaven, how much I shall discredit him!
Would he could tarry with us here awhile,
But being so beholden to the prince,
It were but little grace in any of us,
Bent as he seem'd on going this third day,
To seek a second favor at his hands.
Yet if he could but tarry a day or two,
Myself would work eye dim and finger lame
Far liefer than so much discredit him.'

And Enid fell in longing for a dress
All branch'd and flower'd with gold, a costly gift
Of her good mother, given her on the night
Before her birthday, three sad years ago,
That night of fire, when Edyrn sack'd their house
And scatter'd all they had to all the winds;
For while the mother show'd it, and the two
Were turning and admiring it, the work
To both appear'd so costly, rose a cry
That Edyrn's men were on them, and they fled
With little save the jewels they had on,
Which being sold and sold had bought them bread:
And Edyrn's men had caught them in their flight,
And placed them in this ruin; and she wish'd
The prince had found her in her ancient home;
Then let her fancy flit across the past,
And roam the goodly places that she knew;
And last bethought her how she used to watch,
Near that old home, a pool of golden carp;

And one was patch'd and blurr'd and lustreless
Among his burnish'd brethren of the pool;
And half asleep she made comparison
Of that and these to her own faded self
And the gay court, and fell asleep again,
And dreamt herself was such a faded form
Among her burnish'd sisters of the pool;
But this was in the garden of a king,
And tho' she lay dark in the pool she knew
That all was bright; that all about were birds
Of sunny plume in gilded trellis-work;
That all the turf was rich in plots that look'd
Each like a garnet or a turkis in it;
And lords and ladies of the high court went
In silver tissue talking things of state;
And children of the King in cloth of gold
Glanced at the doors or gambol'd down the walks;
And while she thought, 'They will not see me,' came
A stately queen whose name was Guinevere,
And all the children in their cloth of gold
Ran to her, crying, 'If we have fish at all
Let them be gold; and charge the gardeners now
To pick the faded creature from the pool,
And cast it on the mixen that it die.'
And therewithal one came and seized on her,
And Enid started waking, with her heart
All overshadowed by the foolish dream,
And lo! it was her mother grasping her
To get her well awake; and in her hand
A suit of bright apparel, which she laid
Flat on the couch, and spoke exultingly:

'See here, my child, how fresh the colors look,
How fast they hold, like colors of a shell

That keeps the wear and polish of the wave.
Why not? It never yet was worn, I trow:
Look on it, child, and tell me if ye know it.'

And Enid look'd, but, all confused at first,
Could scarce divide it from her foolish dream:
Then suddenly she knew it and rejoiced,
And answer'd, 'Yea, I know it; your good gift,
So sadly lost on that unhappy night;
Your own good gift!' 'Yea, surely,' said the dame,
'And gladly given again this happy morn.
For when the jousts were ended yesterday,
Went Yniol thro' the town, and everywhere
He found the sack and plunder of our house
All scatter'd thro' the houses of the town,
And gave command that all which once was ours
Should now be ours again; and yester-eve,
While ye were talking sweetly with your prince,
Came one with this and laid it in my hand,
For love or fear, or seeking favor of us,
Because we have our earldom back again.
And yester-eve I would not tell you of it,
But kept it for a sweet surprise at morn.
Yea, truly is it not a sweet surprise?
For I myself unwillingly have worn
My faded suit, as you, my child, have yours,
And, howsoever patient, Yniol his.
Ah, dear, he took me from a goodly house,
With store of rich apparel, sumptuous fare,
And page, and maid, and squire, and seneschal,
And pastime both of hawk and hound, and all
That appertains to noble maintenance.
Yea, and he brought me to a goodly house;
But since our fortune swerved from sun to shade,

And all thro' that young traitor, cruel need
Constrain'd us, but a better time has come;
So clothe yourself in this, that better fits
Our mended fortunes and a prince's bride:
For tho' ye won the prize of fairest fair,
And tho' I heard him call you fairest fair,
Let never maiden think, however fair,
She is not fairer in new clothes than old.
And should some great court-lady say, the prince
Hath pick'd a ragged-robin from the hedge,
And like a madman brought her to the court,
Then were ye shamed, and, worse, might shame the prince
To whom we are beholden; but I know,
When my dear child is set forth at her best,
That neither court nor country, tho' they sought
Thro' all the provinces like those of old
That lighted on Queen Esther, has her match.'

Here ceased the kindly mother out of breath,
And Enid listen'd brightening as she lay;
Then, as the white and glittering star of morn
Parts from a bank of snow, and by and by
Slips into golden cloud, the maiden rose,
And left her maiden couch, and robed herself,
Help'd by the mother's careful hand and eye,
Without a mirror, in the gorgeous gown;
Who, after, turn'd her daughter round, and said
She never yet had seen her half so fair;
And call'd her like that maiden in the tale,
Whom Gwydion made by glamour out of flowers,
And sweeter than the bride of Cassivelaun,
Flur, for whose love the Roman Cæsar first
Invaded Britain: 'But we beat him back,
As this great prince invaded us, and we,

Not beat him back, but welcomed him with joy.
And I can scarcely ride with you to court,
For old am I, and rough the ways and wild;
But Yniol goes, and I full oft shall dream
I see my princess as I see her now,
Clothed with my gift and gay among the gay.'

But while the women thus rejoiced, Geraint
Woke where he slept in the high hall, and call'd
For Enid, and when Yniol made report
Of that good mother making Enid gay
In such apparel as might well beseem
His princess, or indeed the stately Queen,
He answer'd: 'Earl, entreat her by my love,
Albeit I give no reason but my wish,
That she ride with me in her faded silk.'
Yniol with that hard message went; it fell
Like flaws in summer laying lusty corn:
For Enid, all abash'd she knew not why,
Dared not to glance at her good mother's face,
But silently, in all obedience,
Her mother silent too, nor helping her,
Laid from her limbs the costly-broider'd gift,
And robed them in her ancient suit again,
And so descended. Never man rejoiced
More than Geraint to greet her thus attired;
And glancing all at once as keenly at her
As careful robins eye the delver's toil,
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall,
But rested with her sweet face satisfied;
Then seeing cloud upon the mother's brow,
Her by both hands he caught, and sweetly said:

'O my new mother, be not wroth or grieved
At thy new son, for my petition to her.

When late I left Caerleon, our great Queen,
In words whose echo lasts, they were so sweet,
Made promise that, whatever bride I brought,
Herself would clothe her like the sun in heaven.
Thereafter, when I reach'd this ruin'd hall,
Beholding one so bright in dark estate,
I vow'd that, could I gain her, our fair Queen,
No hand but hers, should make your Enid burst
Sunlike from cloud — and likewise thought perhaps,
That service done so graciously would bind
The two together; fain I would the two
Should love each other: how can Enid find
A nobler friend? Another thought was mine:
I came among you here so suddenly
That tho' her gentle presence at the lists
Might well have served for proof that I was loved,
I doubted whether daughter's tenderness,
Or easy nature, might not let itself
Be moulded by your wishes for her weal;
Or whether some false sense in her own self
Of my contrasting brightness overbore
Her fancy dwelling in this dusky hall;
And such a sense might make her long for court
And all its perilous glories: and I thought,
That could I someway prove such force in her
Link'd with such love for me that at a word,
No reason given her, she could cast aside
A splendor dear to women, new to her,
And therefore dearer; or if not so new,
Yet therefore tenfold dearer by the power
Of intermitted usage; then I felt
That I could rest, a rock in ebbs and flows,
Fixt on her faith. Now, therefore, I do rest,
A prophet certain of my prophecy,

That never shadow of mistrust can cross
Between us. Grant me pardon for my thoughts;
And for my strange petition I will make
Amends hereafter by some gaudy-day,
When your fair child shall wear your costly gift
Beside your own warm hearth, with, on her knees,
Who knows? another gift of the high God,
Which, maybe, shall have learn'd to lisp you thanks.'

He spoke: the mother smiled, but half in tears,
Then brought a mantle down and wrapt her in it,
And claspt and kiss'd her, and they rode away.

Now thrice that morning Guinevere had climb'd
The giant tower, from whose high crest, they say,
Men saw the goodly hills of Somerset,
And white sails flying on the yellow sea;
But not to goodly hill or yellow sea
Look'd the fair Queen, but up the vale of Usk,
By the flat meadow, till she saw them come;
And then descending met them at the gates,
Embraced her with all welcome as a friend,
And did her honor as the prince's bride,
And clothed her for her bridals like the sun;
And all that week was old Caerleon gay,
For by the hands of Dubric, the high saint,
They twain were wedded with all ceremony.

And this was on the last year's Whitsuntide.
But Enid ever kept the faded silk,
Remembering how first he came on her
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,
And all her foolish fears about the dress,

And all his journey toward her, as himself
Had told her, and their coming to the court.

And now this morning when he said to her,
'Put on your worst and meanest dress,' she found
And took it, and array'd herself therein.

GERAINT AND ENID.

O PURBLIND race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a lifelong trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true;
Here, thro' the feeble twilight of this world
Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
That other where we see as we are seen!

So fared it with Geraint, who issuing forth
That morning, when they both had got to horse,
Perhaps because he loved her passionately,
And felt that tempest brooding round his heart
Which, if he spoke at all, would break perforce
Upon a head so dear in thunder, said:
'Not at my side. I charge thee ride before,
Ever a good way on before; and this
I charge thee, on thy duty as a wife,
Whatever happens, not to speak to me,
No, not a word!' and Enid was aghast;
And forth they rode, but scarce three paces on,
When crying out, 'Effeminate as I am,
I will not fight my way with gilded arms,
All shall be iron;' he loosed a mighty purse,
Hung at his belt, and hurl'd it toward the squire.
So the last sight that Enid had of home
Was all the marble threshold flashing, strown
With gold and scatter'd coinage, and the squire

Chafing his shoulder: then he cried again,
'To the wilds!' and Enid leading down the tracks
Thro' which he bade her lead him on, they past
The marches, and by bandit-haunted holds,
Gray swamps and pools, waste places of the hern,
And wildernesses, perilous paths, they rode.
Round was their pace at first, but slacken'd soon.
A stranger meeting them had surely thought,
They rode so slowly and they look'd so pale,
That each had suffer'd some exceeding wrong.
For he was ever saying to himself,
'O, I that wasted time to tend upon her,
To compass her with sweet observances,
To dress her beautifully and keep her true'—
And there he broke the sentence in his heart
Abruptly, as a man upon his tongue
May break it when his passion masters him.
And she was ever praying the sweet heavens
To save her dear lord whole from any wound.
And ever in her mind she cast about
For that unnoticed failing in herself
Which made him look so cloudy and so cold;
Till the great plover's human whistle amazed
Her heart, and glancing round the waste she fear'd
In every wavering brake an ambuscade:
Then thought again, 'If there be such in me,
I might amend it by the grace of Heaven,
If he would only speak and tell me of it.'

But when the fourth part of the day was gone,
Then Enid was aware of three tall knights
On horseback, wholly arm'd, behind a rock
In shadow, waiting for them, caitiffs all;
And heard one crying to his fellow, 'Look,

Here comes a laggard hanging down his head,
Who seems no bolder than a beaten hound ;
Come, we will slay him and will have his horse
And armor, and his damsel shall be ours.'

Then Enid ponder'd in her heart, and said :
'I will go back a little to my lord,
And I will tell him all their caitiff talk ;
For, be he wroth even to slaying me,
Far liefer by his dear hand had I die
Than that my lord should suffer loss or shame.'

Then she went back some paces of return,
Met his full frown timidly firm, and said :
'My lord, I saw three bandits by the rock
Waiting to fall on you, and heard them boast
That they would slay you, and possess your horse
And armor, and your damsel should be theirs.'

He made a wrathful answer : 'Did I wish
Your warning or your silence ? one command
I laid upon you, not to speak to me,
And thus ye keep it ! Well then, look — for now,
Whether ye wish me victory or defeat,
Long for my life, or hunger for my death,
Yourself shall see my vigor is not lost.'

Then Enid waited pale and sorrowful,
And down upon him bare the bandit three.
And at the midmost charging, Prince Geraint
Drave the long spear a cubit thro' his breast
And out beyond ; and then against his brace
Of comrades, each of whom had broken on him
A lance that splinter'd like an icicle,

Swung from his brand a windy buffet out
Once, twice, to right, to left, and stunn'd the twain
Or slew them, and dismounting, like a man
That skins the wild beast after slaying him,
Stript from the three dead wolves of woman born
The three gay suits of armor which they wore,
And let the bodies lie, but bound the suits
Of armor on their horses, each on each,
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three
Together, and said to her, 'Drive them on
Before you;' and she drove them thro' the waste.

He follow'd nearer: ruth began to work
Against his anger in him, while he watch'd
The being he loved best in all the world,
With difficulty in mild obedience
Driving them on: he fain had spoken to her,
And loosed in words of sudden fire the wrath
And smoulder'd wrong that burnt him all within;
But evermore it seem'd an easier thing
At once without remorse to strike her dead
Than to cry 'Halt,' and to her own bright face
Accuse her of the least immodesty:
And thus tongue-tied, it made him wroth the more
That she *could* speak whom his own ear had heard
Call herself false; and suffering thus he made
Minutes an age: but in scarce longer time
Than at Caerleon the full-tided Usk,
Before he turn to fall seaward again,
Pauses, did Enid, keeping watch, behold
In the first shallow shade of a deep wood,
Before a gloom of stubborn-shafted oaks,
Three other horsemen waiting, wholly arm'd,
Whereof one seem'd far larger than her lord,

And shook her pulses, crying, 'Look, a prize!
Three horses and three goodly suits of arms,
And all in charge of whom? a girl: set on.'
'Nay,' said the second, 'yonder comes a knight.'
The third, 'A craven; how he hangs his head!'
The giant answer'd merrily, 'Yea, but one?
Wait here, and when he passes fall upon him!'

And Enid ponder'd in her heart and said:
'I will abide the coming of my lord,
And I will tell him all their villainy.
My lord is weary with the fight before,
And they will fall upon him unawares.
I needs must disobey him for his good;
How should I dare obey him to his harm?
Needs must I speak, and tho' he kill me for it,
I save a life dearer to me than mine.'

And she abode his coming, and said to him
With timid firmness, 'Have I leave to speak?'
He said, 'Ye take it, speaking,' and she spoke:

'There lurk three villains yonder in the wood,
And each of them is wholly arm'd, and one
Is larger-limb'd than you are, and they say
That they will fall upon you while ye pass.'

To which he flung a wrathful answer back:
'And if there were an hundred in the wood,
And every man were larger-limb'd than I,
And all at once should sally out upon me,
I swear it would not ruffle me so much
As you that not obey me. Stand aside,
And if I fall, cleave to the better man.'

And Enid stood aside to wait the event,
Not dare to watch the combat, only breathe
Short fits of prayer, at every stroke a breath.
And he she dreaded most bare down upon him.
Aim'd at the helm, his lance err'd ; but Geraint's,
A little in the late encounter strain'd,
Struck thro' the bulky bandit's corselet home,
And then brake short, and down his enemy roll'd,
And there lay still ; as he that tells the tale
Saw once a great piece of a promontory,
That had a sapling growing on it, slide
From the long shore-cliff's windy walls to the beach,
And there lie still, and yet the sapling grew :
So lay the man transfixt. His craven pair
Of comrades making slowlier at the prince,
When now they saw their bulwark fallen, stood ;
On whom the victor, to confound them more,
Spurr'd with his terrible war-cry ; for as one,
That listens near a torrent mountain-brook,
All thro' the crash of the near cataract hears
The drumming thunder of the huger fall
At distance, were the soldiers wont to hear
His voice in battle, and be kindled by it,
And foemen scared, like that false pair who turn'd
Flying, but, overtaken, died the death
Themselves had wrought on many an innocent.

Thereon Geraint, dismounting, pick'd the lance
That pleased him best, and drew from those dead wolves
Their three gay suits of armor, each from each,
And bound them on their horses, each on each,
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three
Together, and said to her, 'Drive them on
Before you,' and she drove them thro' the wood.

He follow'd nearer still: the pain she had
To keep them in the wild ways of the wood,
Two sets of three laden with jingling arms,
Together, served a little to disedge
The sharpness of that pain about her heart:
And they themselves, like creatures gently born
But into bad hands fallen, and now so long
By bandits groom'd, prick'd their light ears, and felt
Her low firm voice and tender government.

So thro' the green gloom of the wood they past,
And issuing under open heavens beheld
A little town with towers, upon a rock,
And close beneath, a meadow gemlike chased
In the brown wild, and mowers mowing in it;
And down a rocky pathway from the place
There came a fair-hair'd youth, that in his hand
Bare victual for the mowers; and Geraint
Had ruth again on Enid looking pale:
Then, moving downward to the meadow ground,
He, when the fair-hair'd youth came by him, said,
'Friend, let her eat; the damsel is so faint.'
'Yea, willingly,' replied the youth; 'and thou,
My lord, eat also, tho' the fare is coarse,
And only meet for mowers;' then set down
His basket, and dismounting on the sward
They let the horses graze, and ate themselves.
And Enid took a little delicately,
Less having stomach for it than desire
To close with her lord's pleasure; but Geraint
Ate all the mowers' victual unawares,
And when he found all empty was amazed;
And 'Boy,' said he, 'I have eaten all, but take
A horse and arms for guerdon; choose the best.'

He, reddening in extremity of delight,
'My lord, you overpay me fifty-fold.'
'Ye will be all the wealthier,' cried the prince.
'I take it as free gift, then,' said the boy,
'Not guerdon; for myself can easily,
While your good damsel rests, return and fetch
Fresh victual for these mowers of our earl;
For these are his, and all the field is his,
And I myself am his; and I will tell him
How great a man thou art: he loves to know
When men of mark are in his territory;
And he will have thee to his palace here,
And serve thee costlier than with mowers' fare.'

Then said Geraint: 'I wish no better fare:
I never ate with angrier appetite
Than when I left your mowers dinnerless.
And into no earl's palace will I go.
I know, God knows, too much of palaces!
And if he want me, let him come to me.
But hire us some fair chamber for the night,
And stalling for the horses, and return
With victual for these men, and let us know.'

'Yea, my kind lord,' said the glad youth, and went,
Held his head high, and thought himself a knight,
And up the rocky pathway disappear'd,
Leading the horse, and they were left alone.

But when the prince had brought his errant eyes
Home from the rock, sideways he let them glance
At Enid, where she droopt: his own false doom,
That shadow of mistrust should never cross
Betwixt them, came upon him, and he sigh'd;

Then with another humorous ruth remark'd
The lusty mowers laboring dinnerless,
And watch'd the sun blaze on the turning scythe,
And after nodded sleepily in the heat.
But she, remembering her old ruin'd hall,
And all the windy clamor of the daws
About her hollow turret, pluck'd the grass
There growing longest by the meadow's edge,
And into many a listless annulet,
Now over, now beneath her marriage ring,
Wove and unwove it, till the boy return'd
And told them of a chamber, and they went;
Where, after saying to her, 'If ye will,
Call for the woman of the house,' to which
She answer'd, 'Thanks, my lord;' the two remain'd
Apart by all the chamber's width, and mute
As creatures voiceless thro' the fault of birth,
Or two wild men supporters of a shield,
Painted, who stare at open space, nor glance
The one at other, parted by the shield.

On a sudden, many a voice along the street,
And heel against the pavement echoing, burst
Their drowse; and either started while the door,
Push'd from without, drave backward to the wall,
And midmost of a rout of roisterers,
Femininely fair and dissolutely pale,
Her suitor in old years before Geraint
Enter'd, the wild lord of the place, Limours.
He moving up with pliant courtliness
Greeted Geraint full face, but stealthily,
In the mid-warmth of welcome and graspt hand,
Found Enid with the corner of his eye,
And knew her sitting sad and solitary.

Then cried Geraint for wine and goodly cheer
To feed the sudden guest, and sumptuously,
According to his fashion, bade the host
Call in what men soever were his friends,
And feast with these in honor of their earl ;
'And care not for the cost ; the cost is mine.'

And wine and food were brought, and Earl Limours
Drank till he jested with all ease, and told
Free tales, and took the word and play'd upon it,
And made it of two colors ; for his talk,
When wine and free companions kindled him,
Was wont to glance and sparkle like a gem
Of fifty facets ; thus he moved the prince
To laughter and his comrades to applause.
Then, when the prince was merry, ask'd Limours,
'Your leave, my lord, to cross the room, and speak
To your good damsel there who sits apart,
And seems so lonely?' 'My free leave,' he said ;
'Get her to speak : she doth not speak to me.'
Then rose Limours, and looking at his feet,
Like him who tries the bridge he fears may fail,
Crost and came near, lifted adoring eyes,
Bow'd at her side and utter'd whisperingly :

'Enid, the pilot star of my lone life,
Enid, my early and my only love,
Enid, the loss of whom hath turn'd me wild —
What chance is this ? how is it I see you here ?
Ye are in my power at last, are in my power.
Yet fear me not : I call mine own self wild,
But keep a touch of sweet civility
Here in the heart of waste and wilderness.

I thought, but that your father came between,
In former days you saw me favorably.
And if it were so do not keep it back:
Make me a little happier: let me know it:
Owe you me nothing for a life half-lost?
Yea, yea, the whole dear debt of all you are.
And, Enid, you and he, I see with joy,
Ye sit apart, you do not speak to him,
You come with no attendance, page or maid,
To serve you — doth he love you as of old?
For, call it lovers' quarrels, yet I know
Tho' men may bicker with the things they love,
They would not make them laughable in all eyes,
Not while they loved them; and your wretched dress,
A wretched insult on you, dumbly speaks
Your story, that this man loves you no more.
Your beauty is no beauty to him now:
A common chance — right well I know it — pall'd —
For I know men: nor will ye win him back,
For the man's love once gone never returns.
But here is one who loves you as of old;
With more exceeding passion than of old:
Good, speak the word: my followers ring him round:
He sits unarm'd; I hold a finger up;
They understand: nay, I do not mean blood;
Nor need ye look so scared at what I say.
My malice is no deeper than a moat,
No stronger than a wall: there is the keep;
He shall not cross us more; speak but the word:
Or speak it not; but then by Him that made me
The one true lover whom you ever own'd,
I will make use of all the power I have.
O pardon me! the madness of that hour
When first I parted from thee moves me yet.'

At this the tender sound of his own voice
And sweet self-pity, or the fancy of it,
Made his eye moist; but Enid fear'd his eyes,
Moist as they were, wine-heated from the feast,
And answer'd with such craft as women use,
Guilty or guiltless, to stave off a chance
That breaks upon them perilously, and said:

'Earl, if you love me as in former years,
And do not practise on me, come with morn,
And snatch me from him as by violence;
Leave me to-night: I am weary to the death.'

Low at leave-taking, with his brandish'd plume
Brushing his instep, bow'd the all-amorous earl,
And the stout prince bade him a loud good-night.
He moving homeward babbled to his men,
How Enid never loved a man but him,
Nor cared a broken egg-shell for her lord.

But Enid left alone with Prince Geraint,
Debating his command of silence given,
And that she now perforce must violate it,
Held commune with herself, and while she held
He fell asleep, and Enid had no heart
To wake him, but hung o'er him, wholly pleased
To find him yet unwounded after fight,
And hear him breathing low and equally.
Anon she rose and, stepping lightly, heap'd
The pieces of his armor in one place,
All to be there against a sudden need;
Then dozed awhile herself, but, overtoil'd
By that day's grief and travel, evermore
Seem'd catching at a rootless thorn, and then

Went slipping down horrible precipices,
And strongly striking out her limbs awoke;
Then thought she heard the wild earl at the door,
With all his rout of random followers,
Sound on a dreadful trumpet, summoning her;
Which was the red cock shouting to the light,
As the gray dawn stole o'er the dewy world
And glimmer'd on his armor in the room.
And once again she rose to look at it,
But touch'd it unawares: jangling, the casque
Fell, and he started up and stared at her.
Then breaking his command of silence given,
She told him all that Earl Limours had said,
Except the passage that he loved her not;
Nor left untold the craft herself had used,
But ended with apology so sweet,
Low-spoken, and of so few words, and seem'd
So justified by that necessity,
That tho' he thought, 'Was it for him she wept
In Devon?' he but gave a wrathful groan,
Saying, 'Your sweet faces make good fellows fools
And traitors. Call the host and bid him bring
Charger and palfrey.' So she glided out
Among the heavy breathings of the house,
And like a household spirit at the walls
Beat, till she woke the sleepers, and return'd;
Then tending her rough lord, tho' all unask'd,
In silence, did him service as a squire;
Till issuing arm'd he found the host and cried,
'Thy reckoning, friend?' and ere he learnt it, 'Take
Five horses and their armors;' and the host,
Suddenly honest, answer'd in amaze,
'My lord, I scarce have spent the worth of one!'
'Ye will be all the wealthier,' said the prince,

And then to Enid, 'Forward! and to-day
I charge you, Enid, more especially,
What thing soever ye may hear, or see,
Or fancy — tho' I count it of small use
To charge you — that ye speak not but obey.'

And Enid answer'd: 'Yea, my lord, I know
Your wish and would obey; but, riding first,
I hear the violent threats you do not hear,
I see the danger which you cannot see:
Then not to give you warning, that seems hard,
Almost beyond me; yet I would obey.'

'Yea so,' said he, 'do it: be not too wise;
Seeing that ye are wedded to a man,
Not all mismated with a yawning clown,
But one with arms to guard his head and yours,
With eyes to find you out however far,
And ears to hear you even in his dreams.'

With that he turn'd and look'd as keenly at her
As careful robins eye the delver's toil;
And that within her which a wanton fool
Or hasty judger would have call'd her guilt
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall.
And Geraint look'd and was not satisfied.

Then forward by a way which, beaten broad,
Led from the territory of false Limours
To the waste earldom of another earl,
Doorm, whom his shaking vassals call'd the Bull,
Went Enid with her sullen follower on.
Once she look'd back, and when she saw him ride
More near by many a rood than yestermorn,

It wellnigh made her cheerful; till Geraint,
Waving an angry hand as who should say,
'Ye watch me,' sadden'd all her heart again.
But while the sun yet beat a dewy blade,
The sound of many a heavily-galloping hoof
Smote on her ear, and turning round she saw
Dust, and the points of lances bicker in it.
Then, not to disobey her lord's behest,
And yet to give him warning, for he rode
As if he heard not, moving back she held
Her finger up, and pointed to the dust.
At which the warrior in his obstinacy,
Because she kept the letter of his word,
Was in a manner pleased, and turning stood.
And in the moment after, wild Limours,
Borne on a black horse, like a thunder-cloud
Whose skirts are loosen'd by the breaking storm,
Half ridden off with by the thing he rode,
And all in passion uttering a dry shriek,
Dash'd on Geraint, who closed with him, and bore
Down by the length of lance and arm beyond
The crupper, and so left him stunn'd or dead,
And overthrew the next that follow'd him,
And blindly rush'd on all the rout behind.
But at the flash and motion of the man
They vanish'd panic-stricken, like a shoal
Of darting fish, that on a summer morn
Adown the crystal dykes at Camelot
Come slipping o'er their shadows on the sand,
But if a man who stands upon the brink
But lift a shining hand against the sun,
There is not left the twinkle of a fin
Betwixt the cressy islets white in flower;
So, scared but at the motion of the man,

Fled all the boon companions of the earl,
And left him lying in the public way;
So vanish friendships only made in wine.

Then like a stormy sunlight smiled Geraint,
Who saw the chargers of the two that fell
Start from their fallen lords and wildly fly,
Mixt with the flyers. 'Horse and man,' he said,
'All of one mind and all right-honest friends!
Not a hoof left: and I methinks till now
Was honest — paid with horses and with arms;
I cannot steal or plunder, no, nor beg:
And so what say ye, shall we strip him there,
Your lover? has your palfrey heart enough
To bear his armor? shall we fast or dine?
No? — then do thou, being right honest, pray
That we may meet the horsemen of Earl Doorm;
I too would still be honest.' Thus he said;
And sadly gazing on her bridle-reins,
And answering not one word, she led the way.

But as a man to whom a dreadful loss
Falls in a far land and he knows it not,
But coming back he learns it, and the loss
So pains him that he sickens nigh to death;
So fared it with Geraint, who, being prick'd
In combat with the follower of Limours,
Bled underneath his armor secretly,
And so rode on, nor told his gentle wife
What ail'd him, hardly knowing it himself,
Till his eye darken'd and his helmet wagg'd;
And at a sudden swerving of the road,
Tho' happily down on a bank of grass,
The prince, without a word, from his horse fell.

And Enid heard the clashing of his fall,
Suddenly came, and at his side all pale
Dismounting loosed the fastenings of his arms,
Nor let her true hand falter, nor blue eye
Moisten, till she had lighted on his wound,
And tearing off her veil of faded silk
Had bared her forehead to the blistering sun,
And swathed the hurt that drain'd her dear lord's life.
Then, after all was done that hand could do,
She rested, and her desolation came
Upon her, and she wept beside the way.

And many past, but none regarded her,
For in that realm of lawless turbulence
A woman weeping for her murder'd mate
Was cared as much for as a summer shower.
One took him for a victim of Earl Doorm,
Nor dared to waste a perilous pity on him:
Another hurrying past, a man-at-arms,
Rode on a mission to the bandit earl;
Half whistling and half singing a coarse song,
He drove the dust against her veilless eyes:
Another, flying from the wrath of Doorm
Before an ever-fancied arrow, made
The long way smoke beneath him in his fear;
At which her palfrey whinnying lifted heel,
And scour'd into the coppices and was lost,
While the great charger stood, grieved like a man.

But at the point of noon the huge Earl Doorm,
Broad-faced with under-fringe of russet beard,
Bound on a foray, rolling eyes of prey,
Came riding with a hundred lances up;
But ere he came, like one that hails a ship,

Cried out with a big voice, 'What, is he dead?'
'No, no, not dead!' she answer'd in all haste.
'Would some of your kind people take him up,
And bear him hence out of this cruel sun?
Most sure am I, quite sure, he is not dead.'

Then said Earl Doorm: 'Well, if he be not dead,
Why wail ye for him thus? ye seem a child.
And be he dead, I count you for a fool;
Your wailing will not quicken him: dead or not,
Ye mar a comely face with idiot tears.
Yet, since the face *is* comely — some of you,
Here, take him up, and bear him to our hall:
An if he live, we will have him of our band;
And if he die, why earth has earth enough
To hide him. See ye take the charger too,
A noble one.'

He spake and past away,
But left two brawny spearmen, who advanced,
Each growling like a dog, when his good bone
Seems to be pluck'd at by the village boys
Who love to vex him eating, and he fears
To lose his bone, and lays his foot upon it,
Gnawing and growling: so the ruffians growl'd,
Fearing to lose, and all for a dead man,
Their chance of booty from the morning's raid,
Yet raised and laid him on a litter-bier,
Such as they brought upon their forays out
For those that might be wounded; laid him on it
All in the hollow of his shield, and took
And bore him to the naked hall of Doorm —
His gentle charger following him unled —
And cast him and the bier in which he lay
Down on an oaken settle in the hall,

And then departed, hot in haste to join
Their luckier mates, but growling as before,
And cursing their lost time, and the dead man,
And their own earl, and their own souls, and her.
They might as well have blest her : she was deaf
To blessing or to cursing save from one.

So for long hours sat Enid by her lord
There in the naked hall, propping his head,
And chafing his pale hands, and calling to him,
Till at the last he waken'd from his swoon,
And found his own dear bride propping his head,
And chafing his faint hands, and calling to him ;
And felt the warm tears falling on his face,
And said to his own heart, 'She weeps for me ;'
And yet lay still, and feign'd himself as dead,
That he might prove her to the uttermost,
And say to his own heart, 'She weeps for me.'

But in the falling afternoon return'd
The huge Earl Doorm with plunder to the hall.
His lusty spearmen follow'd him with noise :
Each hurling down a heap of things that rang
Against the pavement, cast his lance aside,
And doff'd his helm ; and then there flutter'd in,
Half-bold, half-frighted, with dilated eyes,
A tribe of women, dress'd in many hues,
And mingled with the spearmen ; and Earl Doorm
Struck with a knife's haft hard against the board,
And call'd for flesh and wine to feed his spears.
And men brought in whole hogs and quarter beeves
And all the hall was dim with steam of flesh ;
And none spake word, but all sat down at once,
And ate with tumult in the naked hall,

Feeding like horses when you hear them feed;
Till Enid shrank far back into herself,
To shun the wild ways of the lawless tribe.
But when Earl Doorm had eaten all he would,
He roll'd his eyes about the hall, and found
A damsel drooping in a corner of it.
Then he remember'd her, and how she wept;
And out of her there came a power upon him;
And rising on the sudden he said: 'Eat!
I never yet beheld a thing so pale.
God's curse, it makes me mad to see you weep.
Eat! Look yourself. Good luck had your good man,
For were I dead who is it would weep for me?
Sweet lady, never since I first drew breath
Have I beheld a lily like yourself.
And so there lived some color in your cheek,
There is not one among my gentlewomen
Were fit to wear your slipper for a glove.
But listen to me, and by me be ruled,
And I will do the thing I have not done,
For ye shall share my earldom with me, girl,
And we will live like two birds in one nest,
And I will fetch you forage from all fields,
For I compel all creatures to my will.'

He spoke: the brawny spearman let his cheek
Bulge with the unswallow'd piece, and turning stared;
While some, whose souls the old serpent long had drawn
Down, as the worm draws in the wither'd leaf
And makes it earth, hiss'd each at other's ear
What shall not be recorded — women they,
Women, or what had been those gracious things,
But now desired the humbling of their best,
Yea, would have help'd him to it; and all at once

They hated her, who took no thought of them,
But answer'd in low voice, her meek head yet
Drooping, 'I pray you of your courtesy,
He being as he is, to let me be.'

She spake so low he hardly heard her speak,
But like a mighty patron, satisfied
With what himself had done so graciously,
Assumed that she had thank'd him, adding, 'Yea,
Eat and be glad, for I account you mine.'

She answer'd meekly, 'How should I be glad
Henceforth in all the world at anything,
Until my lord arise and look upon me?'

Here the huge earl cried out upon her talk,
As all but empty heart and weariness
And sickly nothing; suddenly seized on her,
And bare her by main violence to the board,
And thrust the dish before her, crying, 'Eat.'

'No, no,' said Enid, vext, 'I will not eat
Till yonder man upon the bier arise,
And eat with me.' 'Drink, then,' he answer'd. 'Here!' —
And fill'd a horn with wine and held it to her, —
'Lo! I, myself, when flush'd with fight, or hot,
God's curse, with anger — often I myself,
Before I well have drunken, scarce can eat:
Drink therefore, and the wine will change your will.'

'Not so,' she cried, 'by Heaven, I will not drink
Till my dear lord arise and bid me do it,
And drink with me; and if he rise no more,
I will not look at wine until I die.'

At this he turn'd all red and paced his hall,
Now gnaw'd his under, now his upper lip,
And coming up close to her, said at last:
'Girl, for I see ye scorn my courtesies,
Take warning: yonder man is surely dead;
And I compel all creatures to my will.
Not eat nor drink? And wherefore wail for one
Who put your beauty to this flout and scorn
By dressing it in rags? Amazed am I,
Beholding how ye butt against my wish,
That I forbear you thus: cross me no more.
At least put off to please me this poor gown,
This silken rag, this beggar-woman's weed:
I love that beauty should go beautifully;
For see ye not my gentlewomen here,
How gay, how suited to the house of one
Who loves that beauty should go beautifully?
Rise therefore; robe yourself in this: obey.'

He spoke, and one among his gentlewomen
Display'd a splendid silk of foreign loom,
Where like a shoaling sea the lovely blue
Play'd into green, and thicker down the front
With jewels than the sward with drops of dew,
When all night long a cloud clings to the hill,
And with the dawn ascending lets the day
Strike where it clung: so thickly shone the gems.

But Enid answer'd, harder to be moved
Than hardest tyrants in their day of power,
With lifelong injuries burning unavenged,
And now their hour has come; and Enid said:

'In this poor gown my dear lord found me first,
And loved me serving in my father's hall;

In this poor gown I rode with him to court,
And there the Queen array'd me like the sun ;
In this poor gown he bade me clothe myself,
When now we rode upon this fatal quest
Of honor, where no honor can be gain'd ;
And this poor gown I will not cast aside
Until himself arise a living man,
And bid me cast it. I have griefs enough :
Pray you be gentle, pray you let me be :
I never loved, can never love but him :
Yea, God, I pray you of your gentleness,
He being as he is, to let me be.'

Then strode the brute earl up and down his hall,
And took his russet beard between his teeth ;
Last, coming up quite close, and in his mood
Crying, 'I count it of no more avail,
Dame, to be gentle than ungentle with you ;
Take my salute,' unknightly with flat hand,
However lightly, smote her on the cheek.

Then Enid, in her utter helplessness,
And since she thought, 'He had not dared to do it,
Except he surely knew my lord was dead,'
Sent forth a sudden sharp and bitter cry,
As of a wild thing taken in the trap,
Which sees the trapper coming thro' the wood.

This heard Geraint, and grasping at his sword, —
It lay beside him in the hollow shield, —
Made but a single bound, and with a sweep of it
Shore thro' the swarthy neck, and like a ball
The russet-bearded head roll'd on the floor.
So died Earl Doorm by him he counted dead.

And all the men and women in the hall
Rose when they saw the dead man rise, and fled
Yelling as from a spectre, and the two
Were left alone together, and he said :

'Enid, I have used you worse than that dead man,
Done you more wrong : we both have undergone
That trouble which has left me thrice your own :
Henceforward I will rather die than doubt.
And here I lay this penance on myself,
Not, tho' mine own ears heard you yestermorn —
You thought me sleeping, but I heard you say,
I heard you say, that you were no true wife :
I swear I will not ask your meaning in it :
I do believe yourself against yourself,
And will henceforward rather die than doubt.'

And Enid could not say one tender word,
She felt so blunt and stupid at the heart :
She only pray'd him, 'Fly, they will return
And slay you ; fly, your charger is without,
My palfrey lost.' 'Then, Enid, shall you ride
Behind me.' 'Yea,' said Enid, 'let us go.'
And moving out they found the stately horse,
Who now no more a vassal to the thief,
But free to stretch his limbs in lawful fight,
Neigh'd with all gladness as they came, and stoop'd
With a low whinny toward the pair : and she
Kiss'd the white star upon his noble front,
Glad also ; then Geraint upon the horse
Mounted, and reach'd a hand, and on his foot
She set her own and climb'd ; he turn'd his face
And kiss'd her climbing, and she cast her arms
About him, and at once they rode away.

And never yet, since high in Paradise
O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,
Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind
Than lived thro' her who in that perilous hour
Put hand to hand beneath her husband's heart,
And felt him hers again: she did not weep,
But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist
Like that which kept the heart of Eden green
Before the useful trouble of the rain:
Yet not so misty were her meek blue eyes
As not to see before them on the path,
Right in the gateway of the bandit hold,
A knight of Arthur's court, who laid his lance
In rest and made as if to fall upon him.
Then, fearing for his hurt and loss of blood,
She, with her mind all full of what had chanced,
Shriek'd to the stranger, 'Slay not a dead man!'
'The voice of Enid,' said the knight; but she,
Beholding it was Edyrn, son of Nudd,
Was moved so much the more, and shriek'd again,
'O cousin, slay not him who gave you life.'
And Edyrn moving frankly forward spake:
'My lord Geraint, I greet you with all love;
I took you for a bandit knight of Doorm;
And fear not, Enid, I should fall upon him,
Who love you, prince, with something of the love
Wherewith we love the Heaven that chastens us.
For once, when I was up so high in pride
That I was halfway down the slope to hell,
By overthrowing me you threw me higher.
Now, made a knight of Arthur's Table Round,
And since I knew this earl when I myself
Was half a bandit in my lawless hour,
I come the mouthpiece of our King to Doorm —

The King is close behind me — bidding him
Disband himself, and scatter all his powers,
Submit, and hear the judgment of the King.'

'He hears the judgment of the King of kings,'
Cried the wan prince; 'and lo, the powers of Doorm
Are scatter'd!' and he pointed to the field,
Where, huddled here and there on mound and knoll,
Were men and women staring and aghast,
While some yet fled; and then he plainlier told
How the huge earl lay slain within his hall.
But when the knight besought him, 'Follow me,
Prince, to the camp, and in the King's own ear
Speak what has chanced; ye surely have endured
Strange chances here alone;' that other flush'd,
And hung his head, and halted in reply,
Fearing the mild face of the blameless King,
And after madness acted question ask'd:
Till Edyrn crying, 'If ye will not go
To Arthur, then will Arthur come to you,'
'Enough,' he said, 'I follow,' and they went.
But Enid in their going had two fears,
One from the bandit scatter'd in the field,
And one from Edyrn. Every now and then,
When Edyrn rein'd his charger at her side,
She shrank a little. In a hollow land,
From which old fires have broken, men may fear
Fresh fire and ruin. He, perceiving, said:

'Fair and dear cousin, you that most had cause
To fear me, fear no longer, I am changed.
Yourself were first the blameless cause to make
My nature's prideful sparkle in the blood
Break into furious flame; being repulsed

By Yniol and yourself, I schemed and wrought
Until I overturn'd him; then set up —
With one main purpose ever at my heart —
My haughty jousts, and took a paramour;
Did her mock-honor as the fairest fair,
And, toppling over all antagonism,
So wax'd in pride that I believed myself
Unconquerable, for I was wellnigh mad:
And, but for my main purpose in these jousts,
I should have slain your father, seized yourself.
I lived in hope that sometime you would come
To these my lists with him whom best you loved,
And there, poor cousin, with your meek blue eyes,
The truest eyes that ever answer'd Heaven,
Behold me overturn and trample on him.
Then, had you cried, or knelt, or pray'd to me,
I should not less have kill'd him. And you came, —
But once you came, — and with your own true eyes
Beheld the man you loved — I speak as one
Speaks of a service done him — overthrow
My proud self, and my purpose three years old,
And set his foot upon me, and give me life.
There was I broken down; there was I saved:
Tho' thence I rode all-shamed, hating the life
He gave me, meaning to be rid of it.
And all the penance the Queen laid upon me
Was but to rest awhile within her court;
Where first as sullen as a beast new-caged,
And waiting to be treated like a wolf,
Because I knew my deeds were known, I found,
Instead of scornful pity or pure scorn,
Such fine reserve and noble reticence,
Manners so kind, yet stately, such a grace
Of tenderest courtesy, that I began

To glance behind me at my former life,
And find that it had been the wolf's indeed:
And oft I talk'd with Dubric, the high saint,
Who, with mild heat of holy oratory,
Subdued me somewhat to that gentleness
Which, when it weds with manhood, makes a man.
And you were often there about the Queen,
But saw me not, or mark'd not if you saw;
Nor did I care or dare to speak with you, 87c
But kept myself aloof till I was changed;
And fear not, cousin; I am changed indeed.'

He spoke, and Enid easily believed,
Like simple noble natures, credulous
Of what they long for, good in friend or foe,
There most in those who most have done them ill.
And when they reach'd the camp the King himself
Advanced to greet them, and beholding her
Tho' pale, yet happy, ask'd her not a word,
But went apart with Edyrn, whom he held 88a
In converse for a little, and return'd,
And, gravely smiling, lifted her from horse,
And kiss'd her with all pureness, brother-like,
And show'd an empty tent allotted her,
And glancing for a minute, till he saw her
Pass into it, turn'd to the prince, and said:

'Prince, when of late ye pray'd me for my leave
To move to your own land and there defend
Your marches, I was prick'd with some reproof,
As one that let foul wrong stagnate and be, 89o
By having look'd too much thro' alien eyes,
And wrought too long with delegated hands,
Not used mine own: but now behold me come

To cleanse this common sewer of all my realm,
With Edyrn and with others: have ye look'd
At Edyrn? have ye seen how nobly changed?
This work of his is great and wonderful.
His very face with change of heart is changed.
The world will not believe a man repents:
And this wise world of ours is mainly right. 90
Full seldom doth a man repent, or use
Both grace and will to pick the vicious quitch
Of blood and custom wholly out of him,
And make all clean, and plant himself afresh.
Edyrn has done it, weeding all his heart
As I will weed this land before I go.
I, therefore, made him of our Table Round,
Not rashly, but have proved him every way
One of our noblest, our most valorous,
Sanest and most obedient: and indeed 91
This work of Edyrn, wrought upon himself
After a life of violence, seems to me
A thousand-fold more great and wonderful
Than if some knight of mine, risking his life,
My subject with my subjects under him,
Should make an onslaught single on a realm
Of robbers, tho' he slew them one by one,
And were himself nigh wounded to the death.'

So spake the King; low bow'd the prince, and felt
His work was neither great nor wonderful, 92
And past to Enid's tent; and thither came
The King's own leech to look into his hurt;
And Enid tended on him there; and there
Her constant motion round him, and the breath
Of her sweet tendance hovering over him,
Fill'd all the genial courses of his blood

With deeper and with ever deeper love,
As the Southwest that blowing Bala lake
Fills all the sacred Dee. So past the days.

But while Geraint lay healing of his hurt,
The blameless King went forth and cast his eyes
On each of all whom Uther left in charge
Long since, to guard the justice of the King:
He look'd and found them wanting; and as now
Men weed the White Horse on the Berkshire hills,
To keep him bright and clean as heretofore,
He rooted out the slothful officer
Or guilty, which for bribe had wink'd at wrong,
And in their chairs set up a stronger race
With hearts and hands, and sent a thousand men
To till the wastes, and moving everywhere
Clear'd the dark places and let in the law,
And broke the bandit holds and cleansed the land.

Then, when Geraint was whole again, they past
With Arthur to Caerleon upon Usk.
There the great Queen once more embraced her friend,
And clothed her in apparel like the day.
And tho' Geraint could never take again
That comfort from their converse which he took
Before the Queen's fair name was breathed upon,
He rested well content that all was well.
Thence after tarrying for a space they rode,
And fifty knights rode with them to the shores
Of Severn, and they past to their own land.
And there he kept the justice of the King
So vigorously yet mildly that all hearts
Applauded, and the spiteful whisper died:
And being ever foremost in the chase,

And victor at the tilt and tournament,
They call'd him the great prince and man of men.
But Enid, whom her ladies loved to call
Enid the Fair, a grateful people named
Enid the Good; and in their halls arose
The cry of children, Enids and Geraints
Of times to be; nor did he doubt her more,
But rested in her fealty till he crown'd
A happy life with a fair death, and fell
Against the heathen of the Northern Sea
In battle, fighting for the blameless King.

BALIN AND BALAN.

PELLAM the King, who held and lost with Lot
In that first war, and had his realm restored
But render'd tributary, fail'd of late
To send his tribute ; wherefore Arthur call'd
His treasurer, one of many years, and spake :
'Go thou with him and him and bring it to us,
Lest we should set one truer on his throne.
Man's word is God in man.'

His baron said :
'We go, but harken : there be two strange knights
Who sit near Camelot at a fountain side
A mile beneath the forest, challenging
And overthrowing every knight who comes.
Wilt thou I undertake them as we pass,
And send them to thee?'

Arthur laugh'd upon him :
'Old friend, too old to be so young, depart,
Delay not thou for aught, but let them sit,
Until they find a lustier than themselves.'

So these departed. Early, one fair dawn,
The light-wing'd spirit of his youth return'd
On Arthur's heart ; he arm'd himself and went,
So coming to the fountain-side beheld
Balin and Balan sitting statue-like,

Brethren, to right and left the spring, that down,
From underneath a plume of lady-fern,
Sang, and the sand danced at the bottom of it.
And on the right of Balin Balin's horse
Was fast beside an alder, on the left
Of Balan Balan's near a poplar-tree.
'Fair sirs,' said Arthur, 'wherefore sit ye here?'
Balin and Balan answer'd: 'For the sake
Of glory; we be mightier men than all
In Arthur's court; that also have we proved;
For whatsoever knight against us came
Or I or he have easily overthrown.'
'I too,' said Arthur, 'am of Arthur's hall,
But rather proven in his Paynim wars
Than famous jousts; but see, or proven or not,
Whether me likewise ye can overthrow.'
And Arthur lightly smote the brethren down,
And lightly so return'd, and no man knew.

Then Balin rose, and Balan, and beside
The carolling water set themselves again,
And spake no word until the shadow turn'd;
When from the fringe of coppice round them burst
A spangled pursuivant, and crying, 'Sirs,
Rise, follow! ye be sent for by the King,'
They follow'd; whom when Arthur seeing ask'd,
'Tell me your names; why sat ye by the well?'
Balin the stillness of a minute broke
Saying, 'An unmelodious name to thee,
Balin, "the Savage" — that addition thine —
My brother and my better, this man here,
Balan. I smote upon the naked skull
A thrall of thine in open hall; my hand
Was gauntleted, half slew him; for I heard

He had spoken evil of me ; thy just wrath
Sent me a three-years' exile from thine eyes.
I have not lived my life delightsomely ;
For I that did that violence to thy thrall,
Had often wrought some fury on myself,
Saving for Balan : those three kingless years
Have past — were wormwood-bitter to me. King,
Methought that if we sat beside the well,
And hurl'd to ground what knight soever spurr'd
Against us, thou would'st take me gladlier back,
And make, as ten times worthier to be thine
Than twenty Balins, Balan knight. I have said.
Not so — not all. A man of thine to-day
Abash'd us both, and brake my boast. Thy will ?'
Said Arthur : 'Thou hast ever spoken truth ;
Thy too fierce manhood would not let thee lie.
Rise, my true knight. As children learn, be thou
Wiser for falling ! walk with me, and move
To music with thine Order and the King.
Thy chair, a grief to all the brethren, stands
Vacant, but thou retake it, mine again !'

Thereafter, when Sir Balin enter'd hall,
The lost one found was greeted as in heaven
With joy that blazed itself in woodland wealth
Of leaf, and gayest garlandage of flowers,
Along the walls and down the board ; they sat,
And cup clash'd cup ; they drank, and some one sang,
Sweet-voiced, a song of welcome, whereupon
Their common shout in chorus, mounting, made
Those banners of twelve battles overhead
Stir as they stirr'd of old, when Arthur's host
Proclaim'd him Victor and the day was won.

Then Balan added to their Order lived
A wealthier life than heretofore with these
And Balin, till their embassage return'd.

'Sir King,' they brought report, 'we hardly found,
So bush'd about it is with gloom, the hall
Of him to whom ye sent us, Pellam, once
A Christless foe of thine as ever dash'd
Horse against horse; but seeing that thy realm
Hath prosper'd in the name of Christ, the King
Took, as in rival heat, to holy things,
And finds himself descended from the Saint
Arimathæan Joseph; him who first
Brought the great faith to Britain over seas.
He boasts his life as purer than thine own;
Eats scarce enow to keep his pulse a-beat;
Hath push'd aside his faithful wife, nor lets
Or dame or damsel enter at his gates
Lest he should be polluted. This gray king
Show'd us a shrine wherein were wonders — yea,
Rich arks with priceless bones of martyrdom,
Thorns of the crown and shivers of the cross,
And therewithal, — for thus he told us, — brought
By holy Joseph hither, that same spear
Wherewith the Roman pierced the side of Christ.
He much amazed us; after, when we sought
The tribute, answer'd, "I have quite foregone
All matters of this world: Garlon, mine heir,
Of him demand it," which this Garlon gave
With much ado, railing at thine and thee.

'But when we left, in those deep woods we found
A knight of thine spear-stricken from behind,
Dead, whom we buried; more than one of us

Cried out on Garlon, but a woodman there
Reported of some demon in the woods
Was once a man, who, driven by evil tongues
From all his fellows, lived alone, and came
To learn black magic, and to hate his kind
With such a hate that when he died his soul
Became a fiend, which, as the man in life
Was wounded by blind tongues he saw not whence,
Strikes from behind. This woodman show'd the cave
From which he sallies and wherein he dwelt.
We saw the hoof-print of a horse, no more.'

Then Arthur, 'Let who goes before me see
He do not fall behind me: foully slain
And villainously! who will hunt for me
This demon of the woods?' Said Balan, 'I!'
So claim'd the quest and rode away, but first,
Embracing Balin: 'Good my brother, hear!
Let not thy moods prevail when I am gone
Who used to lay them! hold them outer fiends,
Who leap at thee to tear thee; shake them aside,
Dreams ruling when wit sleeps! yea, but to dream
That any of these would wrong thee wrongs thyself.
Witness their flowery welcome. Bound are they
To speak no evil. Truly, save for fears,
My fears for thee, so rich a fellowship
Would make me wholly blest: thou one of them,
Be one indeed: consider them, and all
Their bearing in their common bond of love,
No more of hatred than in heaven itself,
No more of jealousy than in Paradise.'

So Balan warn'd, and went; Balin remain'd,
Who — for but three brief moons had glanced away

From being knighted till he smote the thrall,
And faded from the presence into years
Of exile — now would strictlier set himself
To learn what Arthur meant by courtesy,
Manhood, and knighthood; wherefore hover'd round
Lancelot, but when he mark'd his high sweet smile
In passing, and a transitory word
Make knight or churl or child or damsel seem
From being smiled at happier in themselves —
Sigh'd, as a boy, lame-born beneath a height
That glooms his valley, sighs to see the peak
Sun-flush'd or touch at night the northern star;
For one from out his village lately climb'd
And brought report of azure lands and fair,
Far seen to left and right; and he himself
Hath hardly scaled with help a hundred feet
Up from the base: so Balin, marvelling oft
How far beyond him Lancelot seem'd to move,
Groan'd, and at times would mutter: 'These be gifts,
Born with the blood, not learnable, divine,
Beyond *my* reach. Well had I foughten — well —
In those fierce wars, struck hard — and had I crown'd
With my slain self the heaps of whom I slew —
So — better! — But this worship of the Queen,
That honor too wherein she holds him — this,
This was the sunshine that hath given the man
A growth, a name that branches o'er the rest,
And strength against all odds, and what the King
So prizes — overprizes — gentleness.
Her likewise would I worship an I might.
I never can be close with her, as he
That brought her hither. Shall I pray the King
To let me bear some token of his Queen
Whereon to gaze, remembering her — forget

My heats and violences? live afresh?
What if the Queen disdain'd to grant it! nay,
Being so stately-gentle, would she make
My darkness blackness? and with how sweet grace
She greeted my return! Bold will I be —
Some goodly cognizance of Guinevere,
In lieu of this rough beast upon my shield,
Langued gules, and tooth'd with grinning savagery.'

And Arthur, when Sir Balin sought him, said,
'What wilt thou bear?' Balin was bold, and ask'd
To bear her own crown-royal upon shield,
Whereat she smiled and turn'd her to the King,
Who answer'd: 'Thou shalt put the crown to use.
The crown is but the shadow of the king,
And this a shadow's shadow, let him have it,
So this will help him of his violences!'
'No shadow,' said Sir Balin, 'O my Queen,
But light to me! no shadow, O my King,
But golden earnest of a gentler life!'

So Balin bare the crown, and all the knights
Approved him, and the Queen; and all the world
Made music, and he felt his being move
In music with his Order and the King.

The nightingale, full-toned in middle May,
Hath ever and anon a note so thin
It seems another voice in other groves;
Thus, after some quick burst of sudden wrath,
The music in him seem'd to change and grow
Faint and far-off.

And once he saw the thrall
His passion half had gauntleted to death,

That causer of his banishment and shame,
Smile at him, as he deem'd, presumptuously.
His arm half rose to strike again, but fell:
The memory of that cognizance on shield
Weighted it down, but in himself he moan'd:

'Too high this mount of Camelot for me;
These high-set courtesies are not for me.
Shall I not rather prove the worse for these?
Fierier and stormier from restraining, break
Into some madness even before the Queen?'

Thus, as a hearth lit in a mountain home,
And glancing on the window, when the gloom
Of twilight deepens round it, seems a flame
That rages in the woodland far below,
So when his moods were darken'd, court and king
And all the kindly warmth of Arthur's hall
Shadow'd an angry distance: yet he strove
To learn the graces of their Table, fought
Hard with himself, and seem'd at length in peace.

Then chanced, one morning, that Sir Balin sat
Close-bower'd in that garden nigh the hall.
A walk of roses ran from door to door;
A walk of lilies crost it to the bower:
And down that range of roses the great Queen
Came with slow steps, the morning on her face;
And all in shadow from the counter door
Sir Lancelot as to meet her, then at once,
As if he saw not, glanced aside, and paced
The long white walk of lilies toward the bower.
Follow'd the Queen; Sir Balin heard her 'Prince,
Art thou so little loyal to thy Queen

As pass without good morrow to thy Queen?'
To whom Sir Lancelot with his eyes on earth,
'Fain would I still be loyal to the Queen.'
'Yea, so,' she said; 'but so to pass me by—
So loyal scarce is loyal to thyself,
Whom all men rate the king of courtesy.
Let be: ye stand, fair lord, as in a dream.'

Then Lancelot with his hand among the flowers:
'Yea — for a dream. Last night methought I saw
That maiden Saint who stands with lily in hand
In yonder shrine. All round her prest the dark,
And all the light upon her silver face
Flow'd from the spiritual lily that she held.
Lo! these her emblems drew mine eyes — away;
For see, how perfect-pure! As light a flush
As hardly tints the blossom of the quince
Would mar their charm of stainless maidenhood.'

'Sweeter to me,' she said, 'this garden rose
Deep-hued and many-folded! sweeter still
The wild-wood hyacinth and the bloom of May!
Prince, we have ridden before among the flowers
In those fair days — not all as cool as these,
Tho' season-earlier. Art thou sad? or sick?
Our noble King will send thee his own leech —
Sick? or for any matter anger'd at me?'

Then Lancelot lifted his large eyes; they dwelt
Deep-tranced on hers, and could not fall: her hue
Changed at his gaze: so turning side by side
They past, and Balin started from his bower.

'Queen? subject? but I see not what I see.
Damsel and lover? hear not what I hear.

My father hath begotten me in his wrath.
I suffer from the things before me, know,
Learn nothing; am not worthy to be knight;
A churl, a clown!' and in him gloom on gloom
Deepen'd: he sharply caught his lance and shield,
Nor stay'd to crave permission of the King,
But, mad for strange adventure, dash'd away.

He took the selfsame track as Balan, saw
The fountain where they sat together, sigh'd,
'Was I not better there with him?' and rode
The skyless woods, but under open blue
Came on the hoar-head woodman at a bough
Wearily hewing. 'Churl, thine axe!' he cried,
Descended, and disjointed it at a blow:
To whom the woodman utter'd wonderingly,
'Lord, thou couldst lay the devil of these woods
If arm of flesh could lay him!' Balin cried,
'Him, or the viler devil who plays his part;
To lay that devil would lay the devil in me.'
'Nay,' said the churl, 'our devil is a truth,
I saw the flash of him but yester-even.
And some *do* say that our Sir Garlon too
Hath learn'd black magic, and to ride unseen.
Look to the cave.' But Balin answer'd him,
'Old fabler, these be fancies of the churl;
Look to thy woodcraft,' and so leaving him,
Now with slack rein and careless of himself,
Now with dug spur and raving at himself,
Now with droopt brow down the long glades he rode;
So mark'd not on his right a cavern-chasm
Yawn over darkness, where, nor far within,
The whole day died, but, dying, gleam'd on rocks
Roof-pendent, sharp; and others from the floor,

Tusklike, arising, made that mouth of night
Whereout the demon issued up from hell.
He mark'd not this, but, blind and deaf to all
Save that chain'd rage which ever yelpt within,
Past eastward from the falling sun. At once
He felt the hollow-beaten mosses thud
And tremble, and then the shadow of a spear,
Shot from behind him, ran along the ground.
Sideways he started from the path, and saw,
With pointed lance as if to pierce, a shape,
A light of armor by him flash, and pass
And vanish in the woods; and follow'd this,
But all so blind in rage that unawares
He burst his lance against a forest bough,
Dishorsed himself, and rose again, and fled
Far, till the castle of a king, the hall
Of Pellam, lichen-bearded, grayly draped
With streaming grass, appear'd, low-built but strong;
The ruinous donjon as a knoll of moss,
The battlement overtopt with ivy-tods,
A home of bats, in every tower an owl.

Then spake the men of Pellam crying, 'Lord,
Why wear ye this crown-royal upon shield?'
Said Balin, 'For the fairest and the best
Of ladies living gave me this to bear.'
So stall'd his horse, and strode across the court,
But found the greetings both of knight and king
Faint in the low dark hall of banquet: leaves
Laid their green faces flat against the panes,
Sprays grated, and the canker'd boughs without
Whined in the wood; for all was hush'd within,
Till when at feast Sir Garlon likewise ask'd,
Why wear ye that crown-royal?' Balin said,

'The Queen we worship, Lancelot, I, and all,
As fairest, best, and purest, granted me
To bear it!' Such a sound — for Arthur's knights
Were hated strangers in the hall — as makes
The white swan-mother, sitting, when she hears
A strange knee rustle thro' her secret reeds,
Made Garlon, hissing; then he sourly smiled:
'Fairest I grant her: I have seen; but best,
Best, purest? *thou* from Arthur's hall, and yet
So simple! hast thou eyes, or if, are these
So far besotted that they fail to see
This fair wife-worship cloaks a secret shame?
Truly, ye men of Arthur be but babes.'

A goblet on the board by Balin, boss'd
With holy Joseph's legend, on his right
Stood, all of massiest bronze: one side had sea
And ship and sail and angels blowing on it;
And one was rough with wattling, and the walls
Of that low church he built at Glastonbury.
This Balin graspt, but while in act to hurl,
Thro' memory of that token on the shield
Relax'd his hold: 'I will be gentle,' he thought,
'And passing gentle;' caught his hand away,
Then fiercely to Sir Garlon: 'Eyes have I
That saw to-day the shadow of a spear,
Shot from behind me, run along the ground;
Eyes too that long have watch'd how Lancelot draws
From homage to the best and purest, might,
Name, manhood, and a grace, but scantly thine
Who, sitting in thine own hall, canst endure
To mouth so huge a foulness — to thy guest,
Me, me of Arthur's Table. Felon talk!
Let be! no more!'

But not the less by night
The scorn of Garlon, poisoning all his rest,
Stung him in dreams. At length, and dim thro' leaves
Blinkt the white morn, sprays grated, and old boughs
Whined in the wood. He rose, descended, met
The scorner in the castle court, and fain,
For hate and loathing, would have past him by;
But when Sir Garlon utter'd mocking-wise,
'What, wear ye still that same crown-scandalous?'
His countenance blacken'd, and his forehead veins
Bloated and branch'd; and tearing out of sheath
The brand, Sir Balin with a fiery, 'Ha!
So thou be shadow, here I make thee ghost,'
Hard upon helm smote him, and the blade flew
Splintering in six, and clinkt upon the stones.
Then Garlon, reeling slowly backward, fell,
And Balin by the banneret of his helm
Dragg'd him, and struck, but from the castle a cry
Sounded across the court, and — men-at-arms,
A score with pointed lances, making at him —
He dash'd the pummel at the foremost face,
Beneath a low door dipt, and made his feet
Wings thro' a glimmering gallery, till he mark'd
The portal of King Pellam's chapel wide
And inward to the wall; he stept behind;
Thence in a moment heard them pass like wolves
Howling; but while he stared about the shrine,
In which he scarce could spy the Christ for Saints,
Beheld before a golden altar lie
The longest lance his eyes had ever seen,
Point-painted red; and seizing thereupon
Push'd thro' an open casement down, lean'd on it,
Leapt in a semicircle, and lit on earth;
Then hand at ear, and harkening from what side

The blindfold rummage buried in the walls
Might echo, ran the counter path, and found
His charger, mounted on him and away.
An arrow whizz'd to the right, one to the left,
One overhead; and Pellam's feeble cry,
'Stay, stay him! he defileth heavenly things
With earthly uses!' made him quickly dive
Beneath the boughs, and race thro' many a mile
Of dense and open, till his goodly horse,
Arising wearily at a fallen oak,
Stumbled headlong, and cast him face to ground.

Half-wroth he had not ended, but all glad,
Knightlike, to find his charger yet unlamed,
Sir Balin drew the shield from off his neck,
Stared at the priceless cognizance, and thought,
'I have shamed thee so that now thou shamest me,
Thee will I bear no more,' high on a branch
Hung it, and turn'd aside into the woods,
And there in gloom cast himself all along,
Moaning, 'My violences, my violences!'

But now the wholesome music of the wood
Was dumb'd by one from out the hall of Mark,
A damsel-errant, warbling, as she rode
The woodland alleys, Vivien, with her squire.

'The fire of Heaven has kill'd the barren cold,
And kindled all the plain and all the wold.
The new leaf ever pushes off the old.
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell.

'Old priest, who mumble worship in your quire—
Old monk and nun, ye scorn the world's desire,

Yet in your frosty cells ye feel the fire!
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell.

'The fire of Heaven is on the dusty ways.
The wayside blossoms open to the blaze.
The whole wood-world is one full peal of praise.
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell.

'The fire of Heaven is lord of all things good,
And starve not thou this fire within thy blood,
But follow Vivien thro' the fiery flood!
The fire of Heaven is not the flame of Hell!'

Then turning to her squire, 'This fire of Heaven,
This old sun-worship, boy, will rise again,
And beat the cross to earth, and break the King
And all his Table.'

Then they reach'd a glade,
Where under one long lane of cloudless air
Before another wood, the royal crown
Sparkled, and swaying upon a restless elm
Drew the vague glance of Vivien and her squire;
Amazed were these; 'Lo there,' she cried — 'a crown —
Borne by some high lord-prince of Arthur's hall,
And there a horse! the rider? where is he?
See, yonder lies one dead within the wood.
Not dead; he stirs! — but sleeping. I will speak.
Hail, royal knight, we break on thy sweet rest,
Not, doubtless, all unearn'd by noble deeds.
But bounden art thou, if from Arthur's hall,
To help the weak. Behold, I fly from shame,
A lustful king, who sought to win my love
Thro' evil ways: the knight, with whom I rode,

Hath suffer'd misadventure, and my squire
Hath in him small defence; but thou, Sir Prince,
Wilt surely guide me to the warrior King,
Arthur the blameless, pure as any maid,
To get me shelter for my maidenhood.
I charge thee by that crown upon thy shield,
And by the great Queen's name, arise and hence.'

And Balin rose: 'Thither no more! nor prince
Nor knight am I, but one that hath defamed
The cognizance she gave me: here I dwell
Savage among the savage woods, here die —
Die: let the wolves' black maws ensepulchre
Their brother beast, whose anger was his lord!
O me, that such a name as Guinevere's,
Which our high Lancelot hath so lifted up,
And been thereby uplifted, should thro' me,
My violence, and my villainy, come to shame!'

Thereat she suddenly laugh'd and shrill, anon
Sigh'd all as suddenly. Said Balin to her:
'Is this thy courtesy — to mock me, ha?
Hence, for I will not with thee.' Again she sigh'd:
'Pardon, sweet lord! we maidens often laugh
When sick at heart, when rather we should weep.
I knew thee wrong'd. I brake upon thy rest,
And now full loth am I to break thy dream,
But thou art man, and canst abide a truth,
Tho' bitter. Hither, boy — and mark me well.
Dost thou remember at Caerleon once —
A year ago — nay, then I love thee not —
Ay, thou rememberest well — one summer dawn —
By the great tower — Caerleon upon Usk —
Nay, truly we were hidden: this fair lord,

The flower of all their vestal knighthood, knelt
In amorous homage — knelt — what else? — O, ay,
Knelt, and drew down from out his night-black hair
And mumbled that white hand whose ring'd caress
Had wander'd from her own King's golden head,
And lost itself in darkness, till she cried —
I thought the great tower would crash down on both —
"Rise, my sweet King, and kiss me on the lips,
Thou art my King." This lad, whose lightest word
Is mere white truth in simple nakedness,
Saw them embrace: he reddens, cannot speak,
So bashful, he! but all the maiden Saints,
The deathless mother-maidenhood of Heaven,
Cry out upon her. Up then, ride with me!
Talk not of shame! thou canst not, an thou wouldst,
Do these more shame than these have done themselves.'

She lied with ease; but horror-stricken he,
Remembering that dark bower at Camelot,
Breathed in a dismal whisper, 'It is truth.'

Sunnily she smiled: 'And even in this lone wood,
Sweet lord, ye do right well to whisper this.
Fools prate, and perish traitors. Woods have tongues,
As walls have ears; but thou shalt go with me,
And we will speak at first exceeding low.
Meet is it the good King be not deceived.
See now, I set thee high on vantage ground,
From whence to watch the time, and eagle-like
Stoop at thy will on Lancelot and the Queen.'

She ceased; his evil spirit upon him leapt,
He ground his teeth together, sprang with a yell,
Tore from the branch and cast on earth the shield,

Drove his mail'd heel athwart the royal crown,
Stampt all into defacement, hurl'd it from him
Among the forest weeds, and cursed the tale,
The told-of, and the teller.

That weird yell,
Unearthlier than all shriek of bird or beast,
Thrill'd thro' the woods; and Balan lurking there —
His quest was unaccomplish'd — heard and thought
'The scream of that wood-devil I came to quell!'
Then nearing: 'Lo! he hath slain some brother-knight,
And tramples on the goodly shield to show
His loathing of our Order and the Queen.
My quest, meseems, is here. Or devil or man,
Guard thou thine head.' Sir Balin spake not word,
But snatch'd a sudden buckler from the squire,
And vaulted on his horse, and so they crash'd
In onset, and King Pellam's holy spear,
Reputed to be red with sinless blood,
Redden'd at once with sinful, for the point
Across the maiden shield of Balan prick'd
The hauberk to the flesh; and Balin's horse
Was wearied to the death, and, when they clash'd,
Rolling back upon Balin, crush'd the man
Inward, and either fell and swoon'd away.

Then to her squire mutter'd the damsel: 'Fools!
This fellow hath wrought some foulness with his Queen;
Else never had he borne her crown, nor raved
And thus foam'd over at a rival name:
But thou, Sir Chick, that scarce hast broken shell,
Art yet half-yolk, not even come to down —
Who never sawest Caerleon upon Usk —
And yet hast often pleaded for my love —

See what I see, be thou where I have been,
Or else, Sir Chick — dismount and loose their casques;
I fain would know what manner of men they be.'
And when the squire had loosed them, 'Goodly! — look!
They might have cropt the myriad flower of May,
And butt each other here, like brainless bulls,
Dead for one heifer!'

Then the gentle squire:
'I hold them happy, so they died for love:
And, Vivien, tho' ye beat me like your dog,
I too could die, as now I live, for thee.'

'Live on, Sir Boy,' she cried; 'I better prize
The living dog than the dead lion: away!
I cannot brook to gaze upon the dead.'
Then leapt her palfrey o'er the fallen oak,
And bounding forward, 'Leave them to the wolves.'

But when their foreheads felt the cooling air,
Balin first woke, and seeing that true face,
Familiar up from cradle-time, so wan,
Crawl'd slowly with low moans to where he lay,
And on his dying brother cast himself
Dying; and *he* lifted faint eyes; he felt
One near him; all at once they found the world,
Staring wild-wide; then with a childlike wail,
And drawing down the dim disastrous brow
That o'er him hung, he kiss'd it, moan'd, and spake:

'O Balin, Balin, I that fain had died
To save thy life, have brought thee to thy death.
Why had ye not the shield I knew? and why
Trampled ye thus on that which bare the crown?'

Then Balin told him brokenly and in gasps
All that had chanced, and Balan moan'd again:

'Brother, I dwelt a day in Pellam's hall;
This Garlon mock'd me, but I heeded not.
And one said, "Eat in peace! a liar is he,
And hates thee for the tribute!" This good knight
Told me, that twice a wanton damsel came,
And sought for Garlon at the castle-gates,
Whom Pellam drove away with holy heat.
I well believe this damsel, and the one
Who stood beside thee even now, the same.
"She dwells among the woods," he said, "and meets
And dallies with him in the Mouth of Hell."
Foul are their lives; foul are their lips; they lied.
Pure as our own true mother is our Queen.'

'O brother,' answer'd Balin, 'woe is me!
My madness all thy life has been thy doom,
Thy curse, and darken'd all thy day; and now
The night has come. I scarce can see thee now.
Good night! for we shall never bid again
Good morrow — Dark my doom was here, and dark
It will be there. I see thee now no more.
I would not mine again should darken thine;
Good night, true brother.'

Balan answer'd low,
'Good night, true brother here! good morrow there!
We two were born together, and we die
Together by one doom:' and while he spoke
Closed his death-drowsing eyes, and slept the sleep
With Balin, either lock'd in either's arm.

MERLIN AND VIVIEN.

A STORM was coming, but the winds were still,
And in the wild woods of Broceliande,
Before an oak, so hollow, huge, and old
It look'd a tower of ivied masonwork,
At Merlin's feet the wily Vivien lay.

For he that always bare in bitter grudge
The slights of Arthur and his Table, Mark
The Cornish King, had heard a wandering voice,
A minstrel of Caerleon by strong storm
Blown into shelter at Tintagil, say
That out of naked knight-like purity
Sir Lancelot worshipt no unmarried girl,
But the great Queen herself, fought in her name,
Sware by her — vows like theirs that high in heaven
Love most, but neither marry nor are given
In marriage, angels of our Lord's report.

He ceased, and then — for Vivien sweetly said —
She sat beside the banquet nearest Mark, —
'And is the fair example follow'd, sir,
In Arthur's household?' — answer'd innocently:

'Ay, by some few — ay, truly — youths that hold
It more beseems the perfect virgin knight
To worship woman as true wife beyond
All hopes of gaining, than as maiden girl.

They place their pride in Lancelot and the Queen.
So passionate for an utter purity
Beyond the limit of their bond are these,
For Arthur bound them not to singleness.
Brave hearts and clean! and yet — God guide them! young.'

Then Mark was half in heart to hurl his cup
Straight at the speaker, but forbore: he rosé
To leave the hall, and, Vivien following him,
Turn'd to her: 'Here are snakes within the grass;
And you methinks, O Vivien, save ye fear
The monkish manhood, and the mask of pure
Worn by this court, can stir them till they sting.'

And Vivien answer'd, smiling scornfully:
'Why fear? because that foster'd at *thy* court
I savor of thy — virtues? fear them? no.
As love, if love be perfect, casts out fear,
So hate, if hate be perfect, casts out fear.
My father died in battle against the King,
My mother on his corpse in open field;
She bore me there, for born from death was I
Among the dead and sown upon the wind —
And then on thee! and shown the truth betimes,
That old true filth, and bottom of the well,
Where Truth is hidden. Gracious lessons thine,
And maxims of the mud! "This Arthur pure!
Great Nature thro' the flesh herself hath made
Gives him the lie! There is no being pure,
My cherub; saith not Holy Writ the same?" —
If I were Arthur, I would have thy blood.
Thy blessing, stainless King! I bring thee back,
When I have ferreted out their burrowings,
The hearts of all this Order in mine hand —

Ay — so that fate and craft and folly close,
Perchance, one curl of Arthur's golden beard.
To me this narrow grizzled fork of thine
Is cleaner-fashion'd — Well, I loved thee first ;
That warps the wit.'

Loud laugh'd the graceless Mark.
But Vivien, into Camelot stealing, lodged
Low in the city, and on a festal day
When Guinevere was crossing the great hall
Cast herself down, knelt to the Queen, and wail'd.

'Why kneel ye there ? What evil have ye wrought ?
Rise ! ' and the damsel bidden rise arose
And stood with folded hands and downward eyes
Of glancing corner and all meekly said :
'None wrought, but suffer'd much, an orphan maid !
My father died in battle for thy King,
My mother on his corpse — in open field,
The sad sea-sounding wastes of Lyonnesse —
Poor wretch — no friend ! — and now by Mark the king,
For that small charm of feature mine, pursued —
If any such be mine — I fly to thee.
Save, save me thou ! Woman of women — thine
The wreath of beauty, thine the crown of power,
Be thine the balm of pity, O Heaven's own white
Earth-angel, stainless bride of stainless King —
Help, for he follows ! take me to thyself !
O yield me shelter for mine innocency
Among thy maidens ! '

Here her slow sweet eyes
Fear-tremulous, but humbly hopeful, rose
Fixt on her hearer's, while the Queen who stood

All glittering like May sunshine on May leaves
In green and gold, and plumed with green replied:
'Peace, child! of over-praise and over-blame
We choose the last. Our noble Arthur, him
Ye scarce can overpraise, will hear and know.
Nay — we believe all evil of thy Mark —
Well, we shall test thee farther; but this hour
We ride a-hawking with Sir Lancelot.
He hath given us a fair falcon which he train'd;
We go to prove it. Bide ye here the while.'

She past; and Vivien murmur'd after, 'Go!
I bide the while.' Then thro' the portal-arch
Peering askance, and muttering broken-wise,
As one that labors with an evil dream,
Beheld the Queen and Lancelot get to horse.

'Is that the Lancelot? goodly — ay, but gaunt:
Courteous — amends for gauntness — takes her hand —
That glance of theirs, but for the street, had been
A clinging kiss — how hand lingers in hand!
Let go at last! — they ride away — to hawk
For waterfowl. Royaller game is mine.
For such a supersensual sensual bond
As that gray cricket chirpt of at our hearth —
Touch flax with flame — a glance will serve — the liars!
Ah little rat that borest in the dyke
Thy hole by night to let the boundless deep
Down upon far-off cities while they dance —
Or dream — of thee they dream'd not — nor of me
These — ay, but each of either: ride, and dream
The mortal dream that never yet was mine —
Ride, ride and dream until ye wake — to me!
Then, narrow court and lubber King, farewell!

For Lancelot will be gracious to the rat,
And our wise Queen, if knowing that I know,
Will hate, loathe, fear — but honor me the more.

Yet while they rode together down the plain,
Their talk was all of training, terms of art,
Diet and seeling, jesses, leash and lure.
'She is too noble,' he said, 'to check at pies,
Nor will she rake: there is no baseness in her.'
Here when the Queen demanded as by chance,
'Know ye the stranger woman?' 'Let her be,'
Said Lancelot, and unhooded casting off
The goodly falcon free; she tower'd; her bells,
Tone under tone, shrill'd; and they lifted up
Their eager faces, wondering at the strength,
Boldness, and royal knighthood of the bird,
Who pounced her quarry and slew it. Many a time
As once — of old — among the flowers — they rode.

But Vivien half-forgotten of the Queen
Among her damsels broidering sat, heard, watch'd,
And whisper'd: thro' the peaceful court she crept
And whisper'd: then, as Arthur in the highest
Leaven'd the world, so Vivien in the lowest,
Arriving at a time of golden rest,
And sowing one ill hint from ear to ear,
While all the heathen lay at Arthur's feet,
And no quest came, but all was joust and play,
Leaven'd his hall. They heard and let her be.

Thereafter, as an enemy that has left
Death in the living waters and withdrawn,
The wily Vivien stole from Arthur's court.

She hated all the knights, and heard in thought
Their lavish comment when her name was named.
For once, when Arthur walking all alone,
Vext at a rumor issued from herself
Of some corruption crept among his knights,
Had met her, Vivien, being greeted fair,
Would fain have wrought upon his cloudy mood
With reverent eyes mock-loyal, shaken voice,
And flutter'd adoration, and at last
With dark sweet hints of some who prized him more
Than who should prize him most; at which the King
Had gazed upon her blankly and gone by.
But one had watch'd, and had not held his peace:
It made the laughter of an afternoon
That Vivien should attempt the blameless King.
And after that, she set herself to gain
Him, the most famous man of all those times,
Merlin, who knew the range of all their arts,
Had built the King his havens, ships, and halls,
Was also bard, and knew the starry heavens;
The people call'd him wizard; whom at first
She play'd about with slight and sprightly talk,
And vivid smiles, and faintly-venom'd points
Of slander, glancing here and grazing there;
And yielding to his kindlier moods, the seer
Would watch her at her petulance and play,
Even when they seem'd unlovable, and laugh
As those that watch a kitten: thus he grew
Tolerant of what he half disdain'd, and she,
Perceiving that she was but half disdain'd,
Began to break her sports with graver fits,
Turn red or pale, would often when they met
Sigh fully, or all-silent gaze upon him
With such a fixt devotion that the old man,

Tho' doubtful, felt the flattery, and at times
Would flatter his own wish in age for love,
And half believe her true; for thus at times
He waver'd, but that other clung to him,
Fixt in her will, and so the seasons went.

Then fell on Merlin a great melancholy;
He walk'd with dreams and darkness, and he found
A doom that ever poised itself to fall,
An ever-moaning battle in the mist,
World-war of dying flesh against the life,
Death in all life and lying in all love,
The meanest having power upon the highest,
And the high purpose broken by the worm.

So leaving Arthur's court he gain'd the beach,
There found a little boat and stept into it;
And Vivien follow'd, but he mark'd her not.
She took the helm and he the sail; the boat
Drave with a sudden wind across the deeps,
And, touching Breton sands, they disembark'd.
And then she follow'd Merlin all the way,
Even to the wild woods of Broceliande.
For Merlin once had told her of a charm,
The which if any wrought on any one
With woven paces and with waving arms,
The man so wrought on ever seem'd to lie
Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower,
From which was no escape for evermore;
And none could find that man for evermore,
Nor could he see but him who wrought the charm
Coming and going, and he lay as dead
And lost to life and use and name and fame.
And Vivien ever sought to work the charm

Upon the great enchanter of the time,
As fancying that her glory would be great
According to his greatness whom she quench'd.

There lay she all her length and kiss'd his feet,
As if in deepest reverence and in love.
A twist of gold was round her hair; a robe
Of samite without price, that more exprest
Than hid her, clung about her lissome limbs,
In color like the satin-shining palm
On sallows in the windy gleams of March:
And while she kiss'd them, crying, 'Trample me,
Dear feet, that I have follow'd thro' the world,
And I will pay you worship; tread me down
And I will kiss you for it;' he was mute:
So dark a forethought roll'd about his brain,
As on a dull day in an ocean cave
The blind wave feeling round his long sea-hall
In silence: wherefore, when she lifted up
A face of sad appeal, and spake and said,
'O Merlin, do ye love me?' and again,
'O Merlin, do ye love me?' and once more,
'Great Master, do ye love me?' he was mute.
And lissome Vivien, holding by his heel,
Writhed toward him, slided up his knee and sat,
Behind his ankle twined her hollow feet
Together, curved an arm about his neck,
Clung like a snake; and letting her left hand
Droop from his mighty shoulder, as a leaf,
Made with her right a comb of pearl to part
The lists of such a beard as youth gone out
Had left in ashes: then he spoke and said,
Not looking at her, 'Who are wise in love
Love most, say least,' and Vivien answer'd quick:

'I saw the little elf-god eyeless once
In Arthur's arras hall at Camelot:
But neither eyes nor tongue — O stupid child!
Yet you are wise who say it; let me think
Silence is wisdom: I am silent then,
And ask no kiss;' then adding all at once,
'And lo, I clothe myself with wisdom,' drew
The vast and shaggy mantle of his beard
Across her neck and bosom to her knee,
And call'd herself a gilded summer fly
Caught in a great old tyrant spider's web,
Who meant to eat her up in that wild wood
Without one word. So Vivien call'd herself,
But rather seem'd a lovely baleful star
Veil'd in gray vapor; till he sadly smiled:
'To what request for what strange boon,' he said,
'Are these your pretty tricks and fooleries,
O Vivien, the preamble? yet my thanks,
For these have broken up my melancholy.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily:
'What, O my Master, have ye found your voice?
I bid the stranger welcome. Thanks at last!
But yesterday you never open'd lip,
Except indeed to drink: no cup had we;
In mine own lady palms I cull'd the spring
That gather'd trickling dropwise from the cleft,
And made a pretty cup of both my hands
And offer'd you it kneeling: then you drank
And knew no more, nor gave me one poor word:
O, no more thanks than might a goat have given
With no more sign of reverence than a beard.
And when we halted at that other well,
And I was faint to swooning, and you lay

Foot-gilt with all the blossom-dust of those
Deep meadows we had traversed, did you know
That Vivien bathed your feet before her own?
And yet no thanks; and all thro' this wild wood
And all this morning when I fondled you:
Boon, ay, there was a boon, one not so strange —
How had I wrong'd you? surely ye are wise,
But such a silence is more wise than kind.'

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and said:
'O, did ye never lie upon the shore,
And watch the curl'd white of the coming wave
Glass'd in the slippery sand before it breaks?
Even such a wave, but not so pleasurable,
Dark in the glass of some presageful mood,
Had I for three days seen, ready to fall.
And then I rose and fled from Arthur's court
To break the mood. You follow'd me unask'd;
And when I look'd, and saw you following still,
My mind involved yourself the nearest thing
In that mind-mist: for shall I tell you truth?
You seem'd that wave about to break upon me
And sweep me from my hold upon the world,
My use and name and fame. Your pardon, child.
Your pretty sports have brighten'd all again.
And ask your boon, for boon I owe you thrice,
Once for wrong done you by confusion, next
For thanks it seems till now neglected, last
For these your dainty gambols: wherefore ask;
And take this boon so strange and not so strange.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling mournfully:
'O, not so strange as my long asking it,
Not yet so strange as you yourself are strange,

Nor half so strange as that dark mood of yours.
I ever fear'd ye were not wholly mine;
And see, yourself have own'd ye did me wrong.
The people call you prophet: let it be:
But not of those that can expound themselves.
Take Vivien for expounder; she will call
That three-days-long presageful gloom of yours
No presage, but the same mistrustful mood
That makes you seem less noble than yourself,
Whenever I have ask'd this very boon,
Now ask'd again: for see you not, dear love,
That such a mood as that which lately gloom'd
Your fancy when ye saw me following you
Must make me fear still more you are not mine,
Must make me yearn still more to prove you mine,
And make me wish still more to learn this charm
Of woven paces and of waving hands,
As proof of trust. O Merlin, teach it me!
The charm so taught will charm us both to rest.
For, grant me some slight power upon your fate,
I, feeling that you felt me worthy trust,
Should rest and let you rest, knowing you mine.
And therefore be as great as ye are named,
Not muffled round with selfish reticence.
How hard you look and how denyingly!
O, if you think this wickedness in me,
That I should prove it on you unawares,
That makes me passing wrathful; then our bond
Had best be loosed for ever: but think or not,
By Heaven that hears, I tell you the clean truth,
As clean as blood of babes, as white as milk!
O Merlin, may this earth, if ever I,
If these unwitty wandering wits of mine,
Even in the jumbled rubbish of a dream,

Have tript on such conjectural treachery —
May this hard earth cleave to the nadir hell
Down, down, and close again and nip me flat,
If I be such a traitress! Yield my boon,
Till which I scarce can yield you all I am;
And grant my re-reiterated wish,
The great proof of your love: because I think,
However wise, ye hardly know me yet.'

And Merlin loosed his hand from hers and said:
'I never was less wise, however wise,
Too curious Vivien, tho' you talk of trust,
Than when I told you first of such a charm.
Yea, if ye talk of trust I tell you this,
Too much I trusted when I told you that,
And stirr'd this vice in you which ruin'd man
Thro' woman the first hour; for howsoe'er
In children a great curiousness be well,
Who have to learn themselves and all the world,
In you, that are no child, for still I find
Your face is practised when I spell the lines,
I call it, — well, I will not call it vice:
But since you name yourself the summer fly,
I well could wish a cobweb for the gnat
That settles beaten back, and beaten back
Settles, till one could yield for weariness.
But since I will not yield to give you power
Upon my life and use and name and fame,
Why will ye never ask some other boon?
Yea, by God's rood, I trusted you too much!'

And Vivien, like the tenderest-hearted maid
That ever bided tryst at village stile,
Made answer, either eyelid wet with tears:

'Nay, Master, be not wrathful with your maid;
Caress her: let her feel herself forgiven
Who feels no heart to ask another boon.
I think ye hardly know the tender rhyme
Of "trust me not at all or all in all."
I heard the great Sir Lancelot sing it once,
And it shall answer for me. Listen to it.

'"In love, if love be love, if love be ours,
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers:
Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all.

'"It is the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all.

'"The little rift within the lover's lute,
Or little pitted speck in garner'd fruit,
That rotting inward slowly moulders all.

'"It is not worth the keeping; let it go:
But shall it? answer, darling, answer, no.
And trust me not at all or all in all."

'O master, do ye love my tender rhyme?'

And Merlin look'd and half believed her true,
So tender was her voice, so fair her face,
So sweetly gleam'd her eyes behind her tears
Like sunlight on the plain behind a shower;
And yet he answer'd half indignantly:

'Far other was the song that once I heard
By this huge oak, sung nearly where we sit;

For here we met, some ten or twelve of us,
To chase a creature that was current then
In these wild woods, the hart with golden horns.
It was the time when first the question rose
About the founding of a Table Round,
That was to be, for love of God and men
And noble deeds, the flower of all the world;
And each incited each to noble deeds.
And while we waited, one, the youngest of us,
We could not keep him silent, but he flash'd,
And into such a song, such fire for fame,
Such trumpet-blowings in it, coming down
To such a stern and iron-clashing close,
That when he stopt we long'd to hurl together,
And should have done it, but the beauteous beast
Scared by the noise upstarted at our feet,
And like a silver shadow slipt away
Thro' the dim land: and all day long we rode
Thro' the dim land against a rushing wind,
That glorious roundel echoing in our ears,
And chased the flashes of his golden horns
Until they vanish'd by the fairy well
That laughs at iron — as our warriors did —
Where children cast their pins and nails, and cry,
"Laugh, little well!" but touch it with a sword,
It buzzes fiercely round the point; and there
We lost him: such a noble song was that.
But, Vivien, when you sang me that sweet rhyme,
I felt as tho' you knew this cursed charm,
Were proving it on me, and that I lay
And felt them slowly ebbing, name and fame.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling mournfully:
'O, mine have ebb'd away for evermore,

And all thro' following you to this wild wood,
Because I saw you sad, to comfort you.
Lo now, what hearts have men! they never mount
As high as woman in her selfless mood.
And touching fame, howe'er ye scorn my song,
Take one verse more — the lady speaks it — this:

'"My name, once mine, now thine, is closelier mine,
For fame, could fame be mine, that fame were thine,
And shame, could shame be thine, that shame were mine.
So trust me not at all or all in all."

'Says she not well? and there is more — this rhyme
Is like the fair pearl-necklace of the Queen,
That burst in dancing and the pearls were spilt;
Some lost, some stolen, some as relics kept.
But nevermore the same two sister pearls
Ran down the silken thread to kiss each other
On her white neck — so is it with this rhyme:
It lives dispersedly in many hands,
And every minstrel sings it differently;
Yet is there one true line, the pearl of pearls:
"Man dreams of fame while woman wakes to love."
Yea! love, tho' love were of the grossest, carves
A portion from the solid present, eats
And uses, careless of the rest; but fame,
The fame that follows death is nothing to us;
And what is fame in life but half-disfame
And counterchanged with darkness? ye yourself
Know well that envy calls you devil's son,
And since ye seem the master of all art,
They fain would make you master of all vice.'

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and said:
'I once was looking for a magic weed,
And found a fair young squire who sat alone,
Had carved himself a knightly shield of wood,
And then was painting on it fancied arms.
Azure, an eagle rising or, the sun
In dexter chief; the scroll, "I follow fame."
And speaking not, but leaning over him,
I took his brush and blotted out the bird,
And made a gardener putting in a graff,
With this for motto, "Rather use than fame."
You should have seen him blush; but afterwards
He made a stalwart knight. O Vivien,
For you, methinks you think you love me well;
For me, I love you somewhat; rest: and Love
Should have some rest and pleasure in himself,
Not ever be too curious for a boon,
Too prurient for a proof against the grain
Of him ye say ye love: but Fame with men,
Being but ampler means to serve mankind,
Should have small rest or pleasure in herself,
But work as vassal to the larger love
That dwarfs the petty love of one to one.
Use gave me fame at first, and fame again
Increasing gave me use. Lo, there my boon!
What other? for men sought to prove me vile,
Because I fain had given them greater wits;
And then did envy call me devil's son.
The sick weak beast, seeking to help herself
By striking at her better, miss'd, and brought
Her own claw back, and wounded her own heart.
Sweet were the days when I was all unknown,
But when my name was lifted up the storm
Brake on the mountain and I cared not for it.

Right well know I that fame is half-disfame,
Yet needs must work my work. That other fame,
To one at least who hath not children vague,
The cackle of the unborn about the grave,
I cared not for it: a single misty star,
Which is the second in a line of stars
That seem a sword beneath a belt of three,
I never gazed upon it but I dreamt
Of some vast charm concluded in that star
To make fame nothing. Wherefore, if I fear,
Giving you power upon me thro' this charm,
That you might play me falsely, having power,
However well ye think ye love me now —
As sons of kings loving in pupilage
Have turn'd to tyrants when they came to power —
I rather dread the loss of use than fame;
If you — and not so much from wickedness,
As some wild turn of anger, or a mood
Of overstrain'd affection, it may be,
To keep me all to your own self, — or else
A sudden spurt of woman's jealousy, —
Should try this charm on whom ye say ye love.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling as in wrath:
'Have I not sworn? I am not trusted. Good!
Well, hide it, hide it; I shall find it out;
And being found take heed of Vivien.
A woman and not trusted, doubtless I
Might feel some sudden turn of anger born
Of your misfaith; and your fine epithet
Is accurate too, for this full love of mine
Without the full heart back may merit well
Your term of overstrain'd. So used as I,
My daily wonder is, I love at all.

And as to woman's jealousy, O, why not?
O, to what end, except a jealous one,
And one to make me jealous if I love,
Was this fair charm invented by yourself?
I well believe that all about this world
Ye cage a buxom captive here and there,
Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower
From which is no escape for evermore.'

Then the great master merrily answer'd her:
'Full many a love in loving youth was mine;
I needed then no charm to keep them mine
But youth and love; and that full heart of yours
Whereof ye prattle, may now assure you mine;
So live uncharm'd. For those who wrought it first,
The wrist is parted from the hand that waved,
The feet unmortised from their ankle-bones
Who paced it, ages back: but will ye hear
The legend as in guerdon for your rhyme?

'There lived a king in the most eastern East,
Less old than I, yet older, for my blood
Hath earnest in it of far springs to be.
A tawny pirate anchor'd in his port,
Whose bark had plunder'd twenty nameless isles;
And passing one, at the high peep of dawn,
He saw two cities in a thousand boats
All fighting for a woman on the sea.
And pushing his black craft among them all,
He lightly scatter'd theirs and brought her off,
With loss of half his people arrow-slain;
A maid so smooth, so white, so wonderful,
They said a light came from her when she moved.
And since the pirate would not yield her up,

The king impaled him for his piracy,
Then made her queen: but those isle-nurtured eyes
Waged such unwilling tho' successful war
On all the youth, they sicken'd; councils thinn'd,
And armies waned, for magnet-like she drew
The rustiest iron of old fighters' hearts;
And beasts themselves would worship; camels knelt
Unbidden, and the brutes of mountain back
That carry kings in castles bow'd black knees
Of homage, ringing with their serpent hands,
To make her smile, her golden ankle-bells.
What wonder, being jealous, that he sent
His horns of proclamation out thro' all
The hundred under-kingdoms that he sway'd
To find a wizard who might teach the king
Some charm which, being wrought upon the queen,
Might keep her all his own. To such a one
He promised more than ever king has given,
A league of mountain full of golden mines,
A province with a hundred miles of coast,
A palace and a princess, all for him;
But on all those who tried and fail'd the king
Pronounced a dismal sentence, meaning by it
To keep the list low and pretenders back,
Or, like a king, not to be trifled with —
Their heads should moulder on the city gates.
And many tried and fail'd, because the charm
Of nature in her overbore their own;
And many a wizard brow bleach'd on the walls,
And many weeks a troop of carrion crows
Hung like a cloud above the gateway towers.'

And Vivien breaking in upon him, said:
I sit and gather honey; yet, methinks,

Thy tongue has tript a little: ask thyself.
The lady never made *unwilling* war
With those fine eyes: she had her pleasure in it,
And made her good man jealous with good cause.
And lived there neither dame nor damsel then
Wroth at a lover's loss? were all as tame,
I mean, as noble, as their queen was fair?
Not one to flirt a venom at her eyes,
Or pinch a murderous dust into her drink,
Or make her paler with a poison'd rose?
Well, those were not our days: but did they find
A wizard? Tell me, was he like to thee?'

She ceased, and made her lithe arm round his neck
Tighten, and then drew back, and let her eyes
Speak for her, glowing on him, like a bride's
On her new lord, her own, the first of men.

He answer'd laughing: 'Nay, not like to me.
At last they found — his foragers for charms —
A little glassy-headed hairless man,
Who lived alone in a great wild on grass,
Read but one book, and ever reading grew
So grated down and filed away with thought,
So lean his eyes were monstrous; while the skin
Clung but to crate and basket, ribs and spine.
And since he kept his mind on one sole aim,
Nor ever touch'd fierce wine, nor tasted flesh,
Nor own'd a sensual wish, to him the wall
That sunders ghosts and shadow-casting men
Became a crystal, and he saw them thro' it,
And heard their voices talk behind the wall,
And learnt their elemental secrets, powers
And forces; often o'er the sun's bright eye

Drew the vast eyelid of an inky cloud,
And lash'd it at the base with slanting storm;
Or in the noon of mist and driving rain,
When the lake whiten'd and the pinewood roar'd,
And the cairn'd mountain was a shadow, sunn'd
The world to peace again: here was the man.
And so by force they dragg'd him to the king.
And then he taught the king to charm the queen
In such-wise that no man could see her more,
Nor saw she save the king, who wrought the charm,
Coming and going, and she lay as dead,
And lost all use of life: but when the king
Made proffer of the league of golden mines,
The province with a hundred miles of coast,
The palace and the princess, that old man
Went back to his old wild, and lived on grass,
And vanish'd, and his book came down to me.'

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily:
'Ye have the book; the charm is written in it.
Good: take my counsel: let me know it at once;
For keep it like a puzzle chest in chest,
With each chest lock'd and padlock'd thirty-fold,
And whelm all this beneath as vast a mound
As after furious battle turfs the slain
On some wild down above the windy deep,
I yet should strike upon a sudden means
To dig, pick, open, find and read the charm:
Then, if I tried it, who should blame me then?'

And smiling as a master smiles at one
That is not of his school, nor any school
But that where blind and naked Ignorance

Delivers brawling judgments, unashamed,
On all things all day long, he answer'd her:

'Thou read the book, my pretty Vivien!
O ay, it is but twenty pages long,
But every page having an ample marge,
And every marge enclosing in the midst
A square of text that looks a little blot,
The text no larger than the limbs of fleas;
And every square of text an awful charm,
Writ in a language that has long gone by,
So long that mountains have arisen since
With cities on their flanks — thou read the book!
And every margin scribbled, crost, and cramm'd
With comment, densest condensation, hard
To mind and eye; but the long sleepless nights
Of my long life have made it easy to me.
And none can read the text, not even I;
And none can read the comment but myself;
And in the comment did I find the charm.
O, the results are simple; a mere child
Might use it to the harm of any one,
And never could undo it: ask no more;
For tho' you should not prove it upon me,
But keep that oath ye sware, ye might, perchance,
Assay it on some one of the Table Round,
And all because ye dream they babble of you.'

And Vivien, frowning in true anger, said:
'What dare the full-fed liars say of me?
They ride abroad redressing human wrongs!
They sit with knife in meat and wine in horn.
They bound to holy vows of chastity!
Were I not woman, I could tell a tale.

But you are man, you well can understand
The shame that cannot be explain'd for shame.
Not one of all the drove should touch me — swine!'

Then answer'd Merlin careless of her words:
'You breathe but accusation vast and vague,
Spleen-born, I think, and proofless. If ye know,
Set up the charge ye know, to stand or fall!'

And Vivien answer'd frowning wrathfully:
'O ay, what say ye to Sir Valence, him
Whose kinsman left him watcher o'er his wife
And two fair babes, and went to distant lands,
Was one year gone, and on returning found
Not two but three? there lay the reckling, one
But one hour old! What said the happy sire?
A seven-months' babe had been a truer gift.
Those twelve sweet moons confused his fatherhood.'

Then answer'd Merlin: 'Nay, I know the tale.
Sir Valence wedded with an outland dame;
Some cause had kept him sunder'd from his wife.
One child they had; it lived with her: she died.
His kinsman travelling on his own affair
Was charged by Valence to bring home the child.
He brought, not found it therefore: take the truth.'

'O ay,' said Vivien, 'over-true a tale!
What say ye then to sweet Sir Sagramore,
That ardent man? "To pluck the flower in season,"
So says the song, "I trow it is no treason."
O Master, shall we call him over-quick
To crop his own sweet rose before the hour?'

And Merlin answer'd: 'Over-quick art thou
To catch a loathly plume fallen from the wing
Of that foul bird of rapine whose whole prey
Is man's good name: he never wrong'd his bride.
I know the tale. An angry gust of wind
Puff'd out his torch among the myriad-room'd
And many-corridor'd complexities
Of Arthur's palace: then he found a door,
And darkling felt the sculptured ornament
That wreathen round it made it seem his own,
And wearied out made for the couch and slept,
A stainless man beside a stainless maid;
And either slept, nor knew of other there,
Till the high dawn piercing the royal rose
In Arthur's casement glimmer'd chastely down,
Blushing upon them blushing, and at once
He rose without a word and parted from her:
But when the thing was blazed about the court,
The brute world howling forced them into bonds,
And as it chanced they are happy, being pure.'

'O ay,' said Vivien, 'that were likely too!
What say ye then to fair Sir Percivale
And of the horrid foulness that he wrought,
The saintly youth, the spotless lamb of Christ,
Or some black wether of Saint Satan's fold?
What, in the precincts of the chapel-yard,
Among the knightly brasses of the graves,
And by the cold Hic Jacets of the dead!'

And Merlin answer'd careless of her charge:
'A sober man is Percivale and pure,
But once in life was fluster'd with new wine,
Then paced for coolness in the chapel-yard,

Where one of Satan's shepherdesses caught
And meant to stamp him with her master's mark;
And that he sinn'd is not believable;
For, look upon his face! — but if he sinn'd,
The sin that practice burns into the blood,
And not the one dark hour which brings remorse,
Will brand us, after, of whose fold we be:
Or else were he, the holy king whose hymns
Are chanted in the minster, worse than all.
But is your spleen froth'd out, or have ye more?'

And Vivien answer'd frowning yet in wrath:
'O ay; what say ye to Sir Lancelot, friend,
Traitor or true? that commerce with the Queen,
I ask you, is it clamor'd by the child,
Or whisper'd in the corner? do ye know it?'

To which he answer'd sadly: 'Yea, I know it.
Sir Lancelot went ambassador, at first,
To fetch her, and she watch'd him from her walls.
A rumor runs, she took him for the King,
So fixt her fancy on him: let them be.
But have ye no one word of loyal praise
For Arthur, blameless king and stainless man?'

She answer'd with a low and chuckling laugh:
'Man! is he man at all, who knows and winks?
Sees what his fair bride is and does, and winks?
By which the good King means to blind himself,
And blinds himself and all the Table Round
To all the foulness that they work. Myself
Could call him — were it not for womanhood —
The pretty, popular name such manhood earns,

Could call him the main cause of all their crime,
Yea, were he not crown'd king, coward and fool.'

Then Merlin to his own heart, loathing, said:
'O true and tender! O my liege and King!
O selfless man and stainless gentleman,
Who wouldst against thine own eye-witness fain
Have all men true and leal, all women pure!
How, in the mouths of base interpreters,
From over-fineness not intelligible
To things with every sense as false and foul
As the poach'd filth that floods the middle street,
Is thy white blamelessness accounted blame!'

But Vivien, deeming Merlin overborne
By instance, recommenced, and let her tongue
Rage like a fire among the noblest names,
Polluting, and imputing her whole self,
Defaming and defacing, till she left
Not even Lancelot brave nor Galahad clean.

Her words had issue other than she will'd.
He dragg'd his eyebrow bushes down, and made
A snowy pent-house for his hollow eyes,
And mutter'd in himself: 'Tell *her* the charm!
So, if she had it, would she rail on me
To snare the next, and if she have it not
So will she rail. What did the wanton say?
"Not mount as high!" we scarce can sink as low;
For men at most differ as heaven and earth,
But women, worst and best, as heaven and hell.
I know the Table Round, my friends of old;
All brave, and many generous, and some chaste.
She cloaks the scar of some repulse with lies;

I well believe she tempted them and fail'd,
Being so bitter: for fine plots may fail,
Tho' harlots paint their talk as well as face
With colors of the heart that are not theirs.
I will not let her know: nine tithes of times
Face-flatterer and backbiter are the same.
And they, sweet soul, that most impute a crime
Are pronest to it, and impute themselves,
Wanting the mental range, or low desire
Not to feel lowest makes them level all;
Yea, they would pare the mountain to the plain,
To leave an equal baseness; and in this
Are harlots like the crowd that if they find
Some stain or blemish in a name of note,
Not grieving that their greatest are so small,
Inflate themselves with some insane delight,
And judge all nature from her feet of clay,
Without the will to lift their eyes, and see
Her godlike head crown'd with spiritual fire,
And touching other worlds. I am weary of her.'

He spoke in words part heard, in whispers part,
Half-suffocated in the hoary fell
And many-winter'd fleece of throat and chin.
But Vivien, gathering somewhat of his mood,
And hearing 'harlot' mutter'd twice or thrice,
Leapt from her session on his lap, and stood
Stiff as a viper frozen; loathsome sight,
How from the rosy lips of life and love
Flash'd the bare-grinning skeleton of death!
White was her cheek; sharp breaths of anger puff'd
Her fairy nostril out; her hand half-clench'd
Went faltering sideways downward to her belt,
And feeling; had she found a dagger there —

For in a wink the false love turns to hate —
She would have stabb'd him ; but she found it not.
His eye was calm, and suddenly she took
To bitter weeping like a beaten child,
A long, long weeping, not consolable.
Then her false voice made way, broken with sobs:

'O crueller than was ever told in tale
Or sung in song! O vainly lavish'd love!
O cruel, there was nothing wild or strange,
Or seeming shameful — for what shame in love,
So love be true, and not as yours is? — nothing
Poor Vivien had not done to win his trust
Who call'd her what he call'd her — all her crime,
All — all — the wish to prove him wholly hers.'

She mused a little, and then clapt her hands
Together with a wailing shriek, and said:
'Stabb'd through the heart's affections to the heart!
Seethed like the kid in its own mother's milk!
Kill'd with a word worse than a life of blows!
I thought that he was gentle, being great:
O God, that I had loved a smaller man!
I should have found in him a greater heart.
O, I, that flattering my true passion, saw
The knights, the court, the King, dark in your light,
Who loved to make men darker than they are,
Because of that high pleasure which I had
To seat you sole upon my pedestal
Of worship — I am answer'd, and henceforth
The course of life that seem'd so flowery to me
With you for guide and master, only you,
Becomes the sea-cliff pathway broken short,
And ending in a ruin — nothing left

But into some low cave to crawl, and there,
If the wolf spare me, weep my life away,
Kill'd with inutterable unkindliness.'

She paused, she turn'd away, she hung her head,
The snake of gold slid from her hair, the braid
Slipt and uncoil'd itself, she wept afresh,
And the dark wood grew darker toward the storm
In silence, while his anger slowly died
Within him, till he let his wisdom go
For ease of heart, and half believed her true;
Call'd her to shelter in the hollow oak,
'Come from the storm,' and having no reply,
Gazed at the heaving shoulder and the face
Hand-hidden, as for utmost grief or shame;
Then thrice essay'd, by tenderest-touching terms,
To sleek her ruffled peace of mind, in vain.
At last she let herself be conquer'd by him,
And as the cageling newly flown returns,
The seeming-injured simple-hearted thing
Came to her old perch back, and settled there.
There while she sat, half-falling from his knees,
Half-nestled at his heart, and since he saw
The slow tear creep from her closed eyelid yet,
About her, more in kindness than in love,
The gentle wizard cast a shielding arm.
But she dislink'd herself at once and rose,
Her arms upon her breast across, and stood,
A virtuous gentlewoman deeply wrong'd,
Upright and flush'd before him: then she said:

'There must be now no passages of love
Betwixt us twain henceforward evermore;
Since, if I be what I am grossly call'd,

What should be granted which your own gross heart
Would reckon worth the taking? I will go.
In truth, but one thing now — better have died
Thrice than have ask'd it once — could make me stay —
That proof of trust — so often ask'd in vain!
How justly, after that vile term of yours,
I find with grief! I might believe you then,
Who knows? once more. Lo! what was once to me
Mere matter of the fancy, now hath grown
The vast necessity of heart and life.
Farewell; think gently of me, for I fear
My fate or folly, passing gayer youth
For one so old, must be to love thee still.
But ere I leave thee let me swear once more
That if I schemed against thy peace in this,
May yon just heaven, that darkens o'er me, send
One flash that, missing all things else, may make
My scheming brain a cinder, if I lie.'

Scarce had she ceased, when out of heaven a bolt —
For now the storm was close above them — struck,
Furrowing a giant oak, and javelining
With darted spikes and splinters of the wood
The dark earth round. He raised his eyes and saw
The tree that shone white-listed thro' the gloom.
But Vivien, fearing heaven had heard her oath,
And dazzled by the livid-flickering fork,
And deafen'd with the stammering cracks and claps
That follow'd, flying back and crying out,
'O Merlin, tho' you do not love me, save,
Yet save me!' clung to him and hugg'd him close;
And call'd him dear protector in her fright,
Nor yet forgot her practice in her fright,
But wrought upon his mood and hugg'd him close.

The pale blood of the wizard at her touch
Took gayer colors, like an opal warm'd.
She blamed herself for telling hearsay tales;
She shook from fear, and for her fault she wept
Of petulancy; she call'd him lord and liege,
Her seer, her bard, her silver star of eve,
Her God, her Merlin, the one passionate love
Of her whole life; and ever overhead
Bellow'd the tempest, and the rotten branch
Snapt in the rushing of the river-rain
Above them; and in change of glare and gloom
Her eyes and neck glittering went and came;
Till now the storm, its burst of passion spent,
Moaning and calling out of other lands,
Had left the ravaged woodland yet once more
To peace; and what should not have been had been,
For Merlin, overtalk'd and overworn,
Had yielded, told her all the charm, and slept.

Then, in one moment, she put forth the charm
Of woven paces and of waving hands,
And in the hollow oak he lay as dead,
And lost to life and use and name and fame.

Then crying, 'I have made his glory mine,'
And shrieking out, 'O fool!' the harlot leapt
Adown the forest, and the thicket closed
Behind her, and the forest echo'd 'fool.'

NOTES.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE poet became interested in the Arthurian story long before the first series of the *Idylls* was published. *The Lady of Shalott*, which appeared in 1832, is founded upon the legend which was later made the subject of *Lancelot and Elaine*. *The Palace of Art* in the same volume contained an allusion to "that deep-wounded child of Pendragon," or "mythic Uther's deeply wounded son," as it now reads. *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere* were printed in 1842, when the *Morte d'Arthur* was also given to the world. This latter poem, afterwards incorporated in *The Passing of Arthur*, must have been written as early as 1837. Landor writes under date of December 9, 1837: "Yesterday a Mr. Moreton, a young man of rare judgment, read to me a manuscript by Mr. Tennyson, very different in style from his printed poems. The subject is the death of Arthur. It is more Homeric than any poem of our time, and rivals some of the noblest parts of the Odyssea" (Forster's *Life of Landor*, ii. 323).

In 1857 the poet printed "six trial-copies" of *Enid and Nimuë: the True and the False*, containing the stories of *Enid* and *Vivien*, afterwards revised for the edition of 1859. The copy of this book in the library of the British Museum is believed to be the "sole survivor" of the half-dozen.

There is a still earlier form of *Enid* in the Forster Bequest Library of the South Kensington Museum, London, which appears to be a first proof of the poem as printed in the 1857 volume. In the same collection there is a volume of proof-sheets, the title-page of which reads: *The True and the False. Four Idylls of the King*, with the date 1859. It contains the four Idylls which, after further revision, were published the same year with the simpler title of *Idylls of the King*.

This first instalment of the *Idylls* as finally published in July, 1859, included *Enid*, *Vivien*, *Elaine*, and *Guinevere*, as they were then entitled. Ten thousand copies were sold in about six weeks, and the critics were almost unanimous in their praise of the book. Among its warmest admirers was Prince Albert, who sent his copy to the poet, asking him to write his name in it. The note continued:—

"You would thus add a peculiar interest to the book containing those beautiful songs, from the perusal of which I derived the greatest enjoy

ment. They quite rekindle the feeling with which the legends of King Arthur must have inspired the chivalry of old, whilst the graceful form in which they are presented blends those feelings with the softer tone of our present age."

In 1862, a new edition of the *Idylls* appeared, with the dedication to the memory of the Prince, who died in December, 1861.

In 1869, four more Idylls were brought out, — *The Coming of Arthur*, *The Holy Grail*, *Pelleas and Ettarre*, and *The Passing of Arthur*, in which, as already mentioned, the *Morte d'Arthur* of 1842 is incorporated.

In 1872, *The Last Tournament* (contributed to the *Contemporary Review* for December, 1871) and *Gareth and Lynette* appeared; and in 1885 *Balin and Balan*, the last of the series, was included in *Tiresias and Other Poems*.

In 1884, *Enid*, already entitled *Geraint and Enid*, was divided into two parts (numbered I. and II.), and in 1888 these parts received their present titles. The poems were now described as "twelve books," and arranged in the order in which the author intended they should be read.

In the order of *publication* the last Idyll (or the portion of it included in the *Morte d'Arthur* of 1842) was the first, followed successively by the third, fourth (these two, as just explained, being originally one), sixth, seventh, eleventh (as the five were arranged in 1859), first, eighth, ninth, twelfth (as arranged in 1869, the twelfth being the amplification of the *Morte d'Arthur*), second, tenth, and fifth. "Nave and transept, aisle after aisle, the Gothic minster has extended, until, with the addition of a cloister here and a chapel yonder, the structure stands complete." Stedman, from whose *Victorian Poets* we quote this, adds: —

"It has grown insensibly, under the hands of one man who has given it the best years of his life, — but somewhat as Wolf conceived the Homeric poems to have grown, chant by chant, until the time came for the whole to be welded together in heroic form. . . . It is the epic of chivalry, — the Christian ideal of chivalry which we have deduced from a barbaric source, — our conception of what knighthood should be, rather than what it really was; but so skilfully wrought of high imaginings, faery spells, fantastic legends, and mediæval splendors, that the whole work, suffused with the Tennysonian glamour of golden mist, seems like a chronicle illuminated by saintly hands, and often blazes with light like that which flashed from the holy wizard's book when the covers were unclasped. And, indeed, if this be not the greatest narrative poem since 'Paradise Lost,' what other English production are you to name in its place? Never so lofty as the grander portions of Milton's epic, it is more evenly sustained and has no long prosaic passages; while 'Paradise Lost' is justly declared to be a work of superhuman genius impoverished by dreary wastes of theology."

For the origin and development of the story of the *Idylls*, see *Studies in the Arthurian Legend*, by John Rhys, M. A. (Oxford, 1891), *Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Arthurian Story from the 16th Century*, by M. W. Maccallum, M. A. (London, 1894), *Essays on Lord Tennyson's*

Idylls of the King, by Harold Littledale, M. A. (London, 1893), *The Growth of the Idylls of the King*, by Richard Jones, Ph. D. (Philadelphia, 1895), etc. For the allegory in the poems, see *Studies in the Idylls*, by Henry Elsdale (London, 1878), and the articles in the *Contemporary Review* for January, 1870 (by Dean Alford), and May, 1873, (by the editor), both of which were based on the poet's own explanations. For general criticism, see particularly *Tennyson, his Art and Relation to Modern Life*, by Rev. Stopford A. Brooke (London and New York, 1894), in which pp. 255–391 are devoted to the *Idylls*, and *The Poetry of Tennyson*, by Rev. Dr. Henry van Dyke (3d. ed., New York, 1892, pp. 133–196). For bibliographical and miscellaneous information, see the *Handbook to the Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, by Morton Luce (London, 1895), and *A Tennyson Primer*, by William M. Dixon, Litt. D. (London and New York, 1896), which contains the fullest bibliography (though not absolutely complete) published up to the present time (1896). Malory's *Morte Darthur*, from which the poet drew much of his material, is accessible to students in cheap form in the excellent "Globe" edition (London and New York, revised ed. 1893).

The only criticism of the *Idylls* which we will quote here is that in the *Contemporary Review* for May, 1873, referred to above, which has been particularly commended to us by the present Lord Tennyson as a statement of the poet's plan and purpose inspired and approved by himself: —

"When, as 'little more than boy,' Mr. Tennyson first chanced upon a copy of Malory's *King Arthur*, — till then an utterly unknown subject to him, — the world at large was as ignorant as he. And if since then a whole school of Arthur literature has arisen, it is to him that it is mainly traceable.

"The story kindled in him a fire of enthusiasm and delight, and at once the vision of a great poem rose before him. Schemes for its treatment are still extant, and prove the consistency and tenacity with which through evil report and good report the leading idea of it and the original determination have clung to him.

"The 'evil report' took the shape of a discouragement of any such large project, and caused its abandonment for a time. The *Morte d'Arthur* was published as a fragment, but with an introduction which is easily readable between the lines, and shows how thoroughly a great plan was already in the author's mind.

"Then came after a long interval the first four *Idylls of the King*, made as four separate pictures, each according to the character of its heroine — and so made while still the earlier design was given up — but nevertheless pervaded by the one leading and cardinal thought which always lay at the bottom of the writer's mind about it. So that when, after their immense success and the consequent importunities for more about Arthur, the abandoned plan was at length revived, scarce any remodelling of these was needed save here and there of a phrase, but the four already finished pictures fell at once into their natural places as parts of a series.

"The remaining pictures being by degrees completed, the whole are

at last arranged in proper order and sequence, and we can now walk, as it were, through this new 'painted chamber' from beginning to end, to see the effect and learn the import of the most considerable work of art done in our times.

"The first result of such a general survey is not at all necessarily to exhibit the inward thought or connecting under-meaning which really knits the whole together, and makes its vital thread and clue.

"On the contrary, the first impression is rather one of simple and complete external loveliness — of a series of gorgeous landscapes taken exactly from nature — of a glittering and splendid revival of the past — of knightly days and doings set to mellifluous music under the shining skies of chivalry. The eye is satisfied with seeing, and the ear with hearing, and nothing more or further is desired or asked.

"Soon, however, artistic unities begin to emerge, and add the charm of purpose and intention — if only in the sense of æsthetic completeness. For instance, we soon perceive that each after each of the series of pictures presents a different local coloring and dominant landscape effect. The various backgrounds before which the actions of the poem pass are seen to change from earliest spring to latest winter, and comparing these differences we come to find that all the seasons of the year are, turn by turn, set before us.

"We go from the marriage season of spring in the *Coming of Arthur*, where the blossom of the May seems to spread its perfume over the whole scene, to the early summer of the honeysuckle in *Gareth*, the quickly following mowing-season of *Geraint*, and the sudden summer-thunder-shower of *Vivien* — thence to the 'full summer' of Elaine, with oriel casements 'standing wide for heat' — and later, to the sweep of equinoctial storms and broken weather of the *Holy Grail*. Then come the autumn roses and brambles of *Pelleas*, and in the *Last Tournament* the close of autumn-tide, with all its 'slowly mellowing avenues,' through which we see Sir Tristram riding to his doom. In *Guinevere* the creeping mists of coming winter pervade the picture, and in the *Passing of Arthur* we come to 'deep midwinter on the frozen hills,' — and the end of all, on the year's shortest day (taken as the end of the year) — 'that day when the great light of heaven burned at his lowest in the rolling year.' The king, who first appears on 'the night of the New Year,' disappears into the dawning light of 'the new sun bringing the New Year,' and thus the whole action of the poem is comprised precisely within the limits of the one principal and ever-recurring cycle of time.

"But no sooner is this cycle perceived, than we perceive also a 'keeping' which exists between the local color in each poem proper to the season, and the dramatic action which is presented in it. The scenic background of the piece is evidently set with due regard to the events and persons for which it is to form the framework. And so exactly is this done that, had the deliberate object of the author been to write a poem of 'The Year and the Soul,' it could hardly have been better contrived.

"Thus, in the clear and brilliant air, jocund with the sights and sounds and hopes and promises of spring — in air so clear that all the

most distant things seem plain and obvious — 'and even in high day the morning star,' Arthur wins his crown and his wife, and sets up the great Order which is to change the world.

"In such like time and season the young Gareth, full of great heart and faith and innocence, passes through all his vassalage to the fresh and merry insolence of Lynette. The light-heartedness and enthusiasm of the young knight — the unpoisoned darts of Lynette's gay sauciness — the laughable overthrow of the surly Kay — and the delicious surprise of the ending, when life leaps out of seeming death — all are in most perfect tune with spring. No trace of canker or of grief mars the sweet air which breathes throughout, and the poem closes as if a door had been shut upon a southwest breeze.

"The same harmony and keeping may be traced throughout the *Idylls*. The sometime wavering and uneasy love of *Geraint* settles down into a full and steady summer blaze: the sudden-passing thunderstorm of *Vivien* (striking down untimely the tallest spire of earthly wit wantonly exposed to it) divides it from the later and more torrid heats of love under which the 'lily maid' is withered up: and then the broken weather comes, — the just accompaniment of the fitful, unsubstantial madness of the 'holy quest.' The melancholy autumn of the Knighthood follows — knight after knight, as leaf after leaf, decaying and dropping off from all attempt to keep the promise of the spring — till everything that seemed so clear to Arthur becomes wreathed and lost in mist — all that was warm and living lies round him cold and dead. From beyond the limits of this world his only comfort comes to him in voices of which he alone can understand the words; yet at the very last we see, in token of rekindled hope and trust, his face set towards the east and 'the new sun rising — bringing the New Year.'

"But by the time, or before the time, that we have discovered and followed out such unities as these, we find that the whole series of poems as pictures is gradually transforming itself into a moral series and unity, with a significance far greater than any æsthetical one.

"The men and women in the pictures are becoming alive, and their life is far more than their raiment. It is at a real living tragedy, and not at a painting of one, that we find ourselves gazing. Presently we come to see that the high cycle of the soul on earth is set before us as completely by the human actions and passions of the piece as the cycle of the year by its landscapes and seasons.

"And here we come upon an aspect of the matter which makes it intelligible why and how any great and thoughtful man should give his mature life to such a work as these *Idylls* — which else, however exquisite, might stand with other 'idle singing of an empty day' as the mere 'fiddle-playing' of Mr. Carlyle's scorn. We come upon the practice of the great canon, 'Art for Man's sake,' rather than of the little canon, 'Art for Art's sake,' and on some such canon all art work that is meant to last must surely be built.

"The central figure of the hero appears and re-appears through all the series of events in a way which irresistibly suggests that more, if not quite clearly what, is meant by his kingship than mere outward kingliness. So that, when we are at last plainly told in the *Epilogue*

that he shadows Soul in its war with Sense, a 'sudden clearance of haze' seems to take place, and a sort of diffused and luminous gleaming of which we had been dimly conscious all along 'orbs into a perfect star' of meaning.

"If now we read the poems again by the light of this meaning, we shall find the soul come first before us as a conqueror in a waste and desert land groaning under mere brute power. Its history before then is dark with doubt and mystery, and the questions about its origin and authority form the main subject of the introductory poem.

"'Many, themselves the basest, hold it to be base-born, and rage against its rule, —

> "And since his ways are sweet,
> And theirs are bestial, hold him less than man;
> And there be those who deem him more than man,
> And dream he dropt from heaven."

"'Of those who recognize its claim, some, as the hoary chamberlain, accept it on the word of wizards who have written all about it in a sacred book which, doubtless, some day, will become intelligible. Others, as Ulfius and Brastias, standing for commonplace men with commonplace views, are satisfied to think the soul comes as the body does, or not to think at all about it. Others, again, as Bedivere, with warmer hearts, feel there is mystery, where to the careless all is plain, yet seek among the dark ways of excessive natural passion for the key, and drift towards the scandalous accordingly. Then comes the simple touching tenderness of the woman's discovery of conscience and its influence given by Queen Bellicent in the story of her childhood; and this, again, is supplemented and contrasted by the doctrine of the wise men and philosophers put into Merlin's mouth. His "riddling triplets" anger the woman, but are a wonderful summary of the way, part-earnest, part-ironical, and all-pathetic, in which great wit confronts the problem of the soul.

"'The inscrutableness of its origin being thus signified, we see next the recognition of its supremacy, and its first act of kinghood, — the inspiration of the best and bravest near it with a common enthusiasm for Right. The founding of the Order of the Round Table coincides with the solemn crowning of the soul. Conscience, acknowledged and throned as king, binds at once all the best of human powers together into one brotherhood, and that brotherhood to itself by vows so strait and high,

> "That when they rose knighted from kneeling, some
> Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
> Some flushed, and others dazed, as one who wakes
> Half blinded at the coming of a light."

At that supreme coronation-moment, the Spirit is surrounded and cheered on by all the powers and influences which can ever help it — earthly servants and allies and heavenly powers and tokens — the knights, to signify the strength of the body; Merlin, to signify the strength of intellect; the Lady of the Lake, who stands for the Church, and gives the soul its sharpest and most splendid earthly weapon; and

above all, three fair and mystic Queens, "tall, with bright sweet faces," robed in the living colors sacred to love and faith and hope, which flow upon them from the image of our Lord above. These, surely, stand for those immortal virtues which only will abide "when all that seems shall suffer shock," and leaning upon which alone, the soul, when all else falls from it, shall go towards the golden gates of the new and brighter morning.

"'As the first and introductory idyll thus seems to indicate the coming and the recognition of the soul, so the ensuing idylls of the *Round Table* show how its influence fares — waxes or wanes — in the great battle of life. Through all of these we see the body and its passions gain continually greater sway, till in the end the Spirit's earthly work is thwarted and defeated by the flesh. Its immortality alone remains to it, and, with this, a deathless hope.

"'From the sweet spring breezes of Gareth and the story of *Geraint and Enid*, where the first gust of poisoning passion bows for a time with base suspicion, yet passes and leaves pure a great and simple heart, we are led through *Merlin and Vivien*, where, early in the storm, we see great wit and genius succumb, — and through *Lancelot and Elaine*, where the piteous early death of innocence and hope results from it, — to *The Holy Grail*, where we find religion itself under the stress of it, and, despite the earnest efforts of the soul, blown into mere fantastic shapes of superstition. It would be difficult to find a nobler and manlier apology for pure and sane and practical religion, fit for mighty men, than the verdict of the King at the end of this wonderful poem.

"'In *Pelleas and Ettarre* the storm of corruption culminates, whirling the sweet waters of young love and faith (the very life-spring of the world) out from their proper channels, sweeping them into mist, and casting them in hail upon the land. A scarcely-concealed harlot here rides splendid to the court, and is crowned Queen of Beauty in the lists; the lust of the flesh is all but paramount. Then comes the dismal "autumn-dripping gloom" of the *Last Tournament*, with its awful and portentous close — and then in *Guinevere* the final lightning-stroke, and all the fabric of the earthly life falls smitten into dust, leaving to the soul a broken heart for company, and a conviction that, if in this world only it had hope, it were of all things most miserable.

"'Thus ends the *Round Table* and the story of the lifelong labor of the soul.

"'There remains but the passing of the soul "from the great deep to the great deep," and this is the subject of the closing idyll. Here the "last dim, weird battle," fought out in densest mist, stands for a picture of all human death, and paints its awfulness and confusion. The soul alone, enduring beyond the end wherein all else is swallowed up, sees the mist clear at last, and finds those three crowned Virtues, "abiding" true and fast, and waiting to convey it to its rest. Character, upheld and formed by these, is the immortal outcome of mortal life. They wail with it awhile in sympathy for the failure of its earthly plans; but at the very last of all are heard to change their sorrow into songs of joy, and departing "vanish into light."'[1]

[1] The greater part of the foregoing passage is extracted from an article which appeared in the *Spectator* of January, 1870. [It was written by Mr. R. H. Hutton.— *Ed.*]

"Now in giving such a significance to the old legends Mr. Tennyson has kept truer and closer to their spirit than some readers of their letter only have perceived. For nothing is more remarkable amongst all the various and disconnected versions of the older times than the tendency to make of King Arthur an ideal man. This constantly pervades them over a sweep of centuries, and notwithstanding all their great diversities of form and treatment.

"Had it been worth his while the poet might easily have justified himself as an antiquary also by adding to the 'Flos regum Arturus' of his title-page such extracts as this from Joseph of Exeter:—

'The old world knows not his peer, nor will the future show us his equal,—he alone towers over all other kings, better than the past ones, and greater than those that are to be.'

Or this from the *Brut ab Arthur*:—

'In short, God has not made, since Adam was, the man more perfect than Arthur.'

Or this from Alberic:—

'Hic jacet Arturus, flos regum, gloria regni,
Quem probitas morum commendat laude perenni.'

Or many others, in which (as Sharon Turner says) 'all human perfection was collected in Arthur.'

"But, indeed, it was not worth while. From the very first he had seized upon the cardinal point of the ancient thought about Arthur, and this was sufficient.

"The royal Liberator of his people—who shall surely come again and complete his work,—the mystically born King, victorious, defeated but deathless—this was the central figure of a whole literature which flourished for generations, and doubtless was the secret of its wonderful influence and duration.

"It is difficult not to see the analogy it suggests, and difficult to doubt that as a knightly version of the Christ Himself that figure became so popular in the days of chivalry.

"It may surely well have been so, for all the thought of the time ran unconsciously into but one mould, and—as a sort of compromise between the Christ of the Gospels and the Christ which men were able to bear—the ideal of chivalry was fostered by clerical learning and invention as much as by lay imitation and reverence.

"The blemishes and shortcomings of it, inseparable by reason of its traditionary growth, were of course censured, although chiefly from an ecclesiastical point of view; and in the latest versions the priest-bred Galahad displaces as an ideal the warrior-king himself. But this is towards the ending of its time, and when the whole cycle of the legends was losing influence.

"Mr. Tennyson was thus amply justified by ancient precedent in making of his Arthur an ideal king, and also in moulding his plastic material, as the old bards and rhymers and compilers did, to suit his purpose.

"If he has chosen to make a parable not only of *a* soul, but of *the*

Crowned Soul — to paint a 'blameless king,' — in other words to write an *Imitation of Christ*, the mass of modern men will think that he has chosen well and wisely, and will thank him for it. What the ancient men did unconsciously and in part, he seems to have done deliberately and thoughtfully.

"To a certain set, however, this proceeding gives a great offence, and they assail it precisely on the grounds alleged against the King by the baser sort in the poem itself. Men who dislike the Christian ideal as such, and hold it to be merely effeminate, call the Arthur of the *Idylls* 'an impeccable prig,' and rage against his want of manliness. They would cry down 'self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,' to set up self-indulgence, and would push back downhill again towards the brutes the race which has so tediously climbed a little upwards from them.

"It may be questioned whether really manly critics would do this, and whether doing it is not in itself a note of effeminacy. Those who cried loudest 'Io Bacche!' were not of old the manliest of their kind. Nor, if in these days women writers and women-like men fall down and worship animal passion, does it even follow that they have most of what they simulate and praise. Rather perhaps they so much lack it that even as animals they are in defect, and as defective animals they make their bleat for it. The full and perfect animal looks further on for his ambition. The imperfect one finds field enough for unfulfilled desires and unattained powers without transcending the limits of the brute.

"It is clear that in making of his ideal man so obviously an imitation of Christ, Mr. Tennyson has, and must always have had, the most direct intention to oppose, so far as lies within his power, the gospel of the 'fleshly school.' He clearly holds that the old chivalrous ideal of a personal and knightly purity is one of the greatest and highest qualities possible to men and nations, and a doctrine moreover which there is good need just now to preach from the housetop.

"We would commend to certain writers the high song of the knights as they went before the king: —

> "'Blow trumpet! he will lift us from the dust.
> Blow trumpet! live the strength, and die the lust!'

and with this we may pass on from them and their bleatings.

"Nothing is more remarkable, touching the symbolic aspect of the *Idylls*, than the way in which it is attained without the slightest forcing of the realistic narrative. Indeed so fine are the touches which convey it, that but for the author's own admission many readers would still hold there was no parable at all. It is very interesting to follow the thread of realism which is preserved throughout, and which, whether intentionally or not, serves the double purpose of entirely screening any such symbolic under-meaning from all who do not care to seek it, and also of accounting naturally for the supernatural adventures and beliefs recorded in the story itself.

"Thus, for example, in *The Holy Grail* the various apparitions of the mystic vessel are explicable by passing meteors or sudden lightning flashes seen in a season of great tempests and thunder-storms — first

acting on the hysterical exaltation of an enthusiastic nun, and then, by contagion from her faith, upon the imaginations of a few kindred natures.

"Again, in the *Coming of Arthur* the marvellous story of his birth, as told by Bleys, might simply have been founded on a shipwreck when the sea was phosphorescent, and the dragon-shaped bark lifted up on wave-crests against the heaven, and when all hands suddenly perished, save one infant, who was washed ashore.

"Or, again, in the same poem, the three mystic Queens at the Coronation — who become, in one sense, so all-important in their meaning — derive their import in the eyes of Bellicent simply from the accident of colored beams of light falling upon them from a stained-glass window. . . .

"It may be permitted in conclusion to call attention to one or two points of workmanship which seem to have escaped the notice of many critics.

"One of them is the proportion which is kept throughout between the fashion of the language employed and the matter which it conveys. It rises and falls in tone very markedly with the nature of the subject. For instance, the first and last idylls have a distinctly more grave, elevated, and, so to speak, 'monumental' character than the body of the work, and the reason seems to be that the opening and closing poems deal with the more striking awfulnesses of Birth and Death; while in poems of the *Round Table* we move in and out 'among the throngs of men,' and the daily ways and doings of life.

"Here the gravity and state of the diction is much modified. It descends into more or less of colloquial and familiar — falling to its lowest on the tongue of Vivien, and rising when Lancelot, or Arthur, or Merlin speaks, but preserving a general level below that which tells of the coming and passing of the soul.

"Another point is the consummate art with which the irregularities of the versification, while they break up or prevent all monotony, are almost invariably introduced where they help the meaning as much as the music.

"They recur at frequent intervals with a little waver or ripple which relieves all deadness of surface, and changes the shining tracts of verse from standing waters into flowing streams. But though the author seems to be dealing with his words simply as with musical notes — and with especial love for a certain subtle demi-semiquaver — yet in fact occasion is almost always taken from the action of the passage, and where a sense of quickened or altered movement, whether of event or feeling, is to be given.

"Thus, to quote at random from a page or two of the last published idyll, *Gareth and Lynette*: —

'Then would he whistle rapid as any lark,'

. . . . . .

'Blustering upon them like a sudden wind,'

'Would hurry thither, and when he saw the knights,

. . . . . .

"Thy promise, King" — and Arthur glancing at him' —

"In all such cases — and they abound in every idyll — the sense of the passage gains as much as the sound, and the result is as refreshing as the analysis of the process is interesting.

"As the pages are turned over for instances of this treatment, and as name after name again catches the eye, one is newly struck by the abundant and dramatic variety of the men and women moving to and fro. All, as before said, are *alive* and recognizable at a glance; at the sound, as it were, of their voices.

"Lancelot in the splendor of his double nature (a double star with just such complicated orbit) moves, and must always move, upon a level with the King himself, in interest, and even closer to ordinary sympathy. The ceaseless inner war which tears him before our eyes, breeds in us a sense of nearer kinship than we dare to claim with the Royal calm. But through it all how lofty and how great he is! No wonder that he 'knew not he should die a holy man,' and no wonder also that he did so die.

"Tristram comes next — with half of Lancelot left out of him — a second Esau — as bold, as careless, as attractive, and as animal — and when he dies how fitting is the swift, dark death that seems to abolish both him and his works!

"Then Gawain — man of this world essentially — ('man about town' would perhaps be his nearest modern equivalent) — flashing into transient fits of nobleness and tumbling ever into pits of selfish meanness — 'too blind to have desire to see,' yet fired with eager zeal to help the weak against the strong when the occasion comes before his eyes; the slave altogether, in short, of what he sees.

"Then comes Sir Percivale, with ready, pure, and fervid heart and tongue — whose warm and natural love 'being rudely blunted' has made of his impressible temperament — as of his sister's — a proper soil for asceticism. He turns finally to the holy vision at the cost of a mean treason impossible to such a nature save under the hardening impulse of fanaticism, and shuts himself away from a world which he finds himself unequal either to combat or to help.

"How different from Sir Bors, his fellow-enthusiast — who never could have told the story of the Grail, nor desecrated by any speech the things which belonged to God and his own heart! His tender, true, and loyal spirit had its roots down so deep that none but such love as the King's could pierce to where they fed on hidden and perennial springs of faith and prayer.

"And both of these, again, how different from Galahad! — the wild, unearthly cometary knight; the monk in armor; slave of his own illusions; deaf and blind to everything besides; as ignorant of the world as Gawain of the soul; a pseudo-Curtius who makes the gulf he leaps into, and draws down after him those who might else have 'fulfilled the boundless purpose of the King,' and served and saved the common weal with 'crowning common sense.'

"And so we might go on from man to man, and from woman to woman throughout — from the garrulous old Leodogran at the beginning, full of his little sayings and proverbs, to little Dagonet at the end, with his pathetic many-sided ironies and touching loyal faith — a 'con-

verted' fool who has by no means lost his wit with his wickedness, and puts the fool's cap on his questioner.

"And withal it is no study of vivisection with the poet turned into a demonstrator of anatomy — nor a string of instances of morbid introspection, but above all things a poem. The limits and conditions of Art are observed and respected profoundly, and with all its fulness and multitude there is never loss of Form, or confusion, or contradiction. Everywhere 'the spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet.'"

DEDICATION.

The dedication of 1862 (see p. 180 above) is not merely a tribute to Prince Albert, but "strikes the keynote of the poem very artistically by introducing the idea of chivalry that Arthur set before his knights."

6. *My king's ideal knight.* The first reading was "my own ideal knight."

7. *Who reverenced his conscience*, etc. See *Guinevere*, 464–479.

12. *The gloom of imminent war.* Alluding to the threatened war with the United States on account of the "Trent" affair. It was largely through Prince Albert's influence that the danger was averted.

13. *Drew like eclipse.* The first reading was "moved like eclipse."

33. *Thou noble Father of her Kings to be.* Cf. the *Ode at the Opening of the International Exhibition* (1862): "O silent father of our kings to be." In a public speech in 1862, Bulwer Lytton, in alluding to Prince Albert, quoted this line as "the thought so exquisitely expressed by our Poet Laureate." See the sketch of Tennyson's life in our *Select Poems of Tennyson* (revised ed.), p. 187.

37. *To fruitful strifes*, etc. Referring to the International Exhibitions of 1851 and 1862. The Prince was engaged in planning the latter at the time of his death.

THE COMING OF ARTHUR.

The story is from Malory's *Morte Darthur* (book i.), with many variations, particularly in dealing with the coarser features of the old romance.

5. *For many a petty king*, etc. Among those enumerated by Geoffrey of Monmouth, whom the poet follows here, are Brutus, or "Brute," and Locrine, mentioned by Milton in *Comus* (827, 828), Leir (the Lear of Shakespeare) and Cassibelaunus (the Cassibelan of *Cymbeline*, i. 1. 30, etc.)

13. *Aurelius.* Aurelius Ambrosius (or Emrys), "a descendant of the last Roman general who claimed the purple as an Emperor in Britain" (Green, *Making of England*). He met his death by poison, as related by Geoffrey: "For there was near the court a spring of very clear water which the King used to drink of. . . . This the detestable conspirators made use of to destroy him, by so poisoning the whole mass of water which sprang up, that the next time the King drank of it he was seized with sudden death, as were also a hundred other persons after him." Uther, who succeeded him, was his brother.

32. *They grew up to wolf-like men.* Aside from the mythical stories of Romulus and Remus, the *lycanthropi* of Greek and Roman fable, the *lou garous* and *were-wolves* of France and Germany, etc., there are authentic records of human children suckled by wolves. The details of such a case are given in the *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, vol. i. Such children always prove to be idiots and never arrive at maturity. Cf. *Geraint and Enid*, 94.

34. *Groan'd for the Roman legions here again.* This may be, as Littledale suggests, an allusion to the famous *Groans of the Britons*, of Gildas, who says that the Britons wrote to the Roman senate: "The barbarians drive us into the sea; the sea throws us back on the barbarians: thus two modes of death await us, we are either slain or drowned."

36. *Urien, assail'd him.* The 1869 ed. had "Rience" for *Urien*. Geoffrey calls him the brother of Lot; Malory makes him the husband of Arthur's sister, Morgan le Fay. He was a king of North Wales, who "made great war upon King Leodegrance of Cameliard" (Malory).

58. *Then he drave*, etc. The 1st ed. reads:—

> "And he drave
> The heathen, and he slew the beast, and fell'd
> The forest, and let in the sun"

66. *Colleaguing with a score of petty kings.* This line was not in the 1st ed.

72. *Gorlois.* Malory calls him the "duke of Tintagel," in Cornwall. Tintagell is now a small town in Cornwall, on the Bristol Channel, with the ruins of a castle overlooking the sea. Cf. 185 below.

73. *Anton.* He corresponds to the Sir Ector of Malory. His name is taken from that of Antour, who has charge of Arthur in the old *Romance of Merlin*.

94–133. *Thereafter . . . to the death.* This passage is not in the 1st ed. Here, as elsewhere, the poet refers to himself as he "who tells the tale."

99. *And even in high day the morning star.* The planet Venus, when at its brightest, can sometimes be seen at noonday.

111. *Carádos, Urien*, etc. This list of conquered kings is from Malory (i. 10).

132. *Man's word is God in man.* This is repeated in *Balin and Balan*, 8. Littledale paraphrases it thus: "A man's promise is a divine thing, therefore it must be regarded as especially sacred."

134. *Then quickly from the foughten field.* The first reading was: "Then Arthur from the field of battle sent," etc. *Foughten field*, which Tennyson has several times elsewhere (in *The Princess*, *The Holy Grail*, etc.), is a reminiscence of Shakespeare, *Henry V.* iv. 6. 18. "This glorious and well-foughten field."

152. *Merlin's master . . . Bleys.* Cf. Malory (i. 15): "And so Bleise wrote the battle, word for word, as Merlin told him, how it began, and by whom, and in likewise how it had ended, and who had the worse. All the battles that were done in Arthur's days Merlin did his master Bleise do write" (that is, caused him to write).

187. *Ygerne.* Malory calls her "Igraine."

194. *The bright dishonor.* "The guilty splendor" (Littledale).

207. *Should go to wrack.* The only form of *wreck* in Shakespeare and other Elizabethan writers.

208. *And that same night*, etc. Cf. the version of Arthur's birth, etc., in *Guinevere*, 282–293.

247–252. *A doubtful throne . . . to hold his foemen down.* For these six lines the 1st ed. has only these four: —

> "A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas —
> Ye come from Arthur's court: think ye this king —
> So few his knights, however brave they be —
> Hath body enow to beat his foemen down?"

275. *Three fair queens.* Faith, Hope, and Charity (Love). Littledale thinks they are "Charity, Abstinence, and Truth — the three virtues noted by Malory as deficient in the knights;" but see p. 185 above.

282. *The Lady of the Lake.* She symbolizes the Church, or Religion. See p. 184 above.

284. *Samite.* A rich, heavy silk, originally with thread twisted of six fibres (*hexamitum*, of which *samite* is a corruption).

285. *She gave the King his huge cross-hilted sword.* Cf. Malory (i. 23): "And as they rode, Arthur said, I have no sword. No force, said Merlin, hereby is a sword that shall be yours and [if] I may. So they rode till they came to a lake, the which was a fair water and a broad, and in the midst of the lake Arthur was ware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in that hand. Lo, said Merlin, yonder is that sword that I spake of. With that they saw a damsel going upon that lake. What is that? said Arthur. That is the Lady of the Lake, said Merlin." She tells Arthur to row over and take the sword, which he accordingly does. This differs from the version in the *Romance of Merlin*, where Excalibur is identical with the sword that Merlin set in the stone. In Malory these two swords are distinguished.

In line 464 the "voice of the waters" is again mentioned, and in *Lancelot and Elaine*, 1400, the Lady is described as "pacing on the dusky mere" while chanting "snatches of mysterious hymns."

The jewelled hilt of Excalibur is more fully described in the *Passing of Arthur*, 224–226. For the *Urim* of the Jewish High Priest, which many authorities believe to have been precious stones, see *Exodus*, xxviii. 30, *Leviticus*, viii. 8, *Numbers*, xxvii. 21, etc.

Malory says that *Excalibur* means "cut steel." "In R. de Boron's poem *Excalibur* is said to be a *Hebrew* word ('the oldest tongue of all this world,' says Tennyson), and to mean in French *tranche-fer*, cut iron; on which Villemarqué notes that it is a Celtic word, but really possesses the signification given to it by the old romance-writer" (Littledale).

302. *And ye shall see.* The 1st ed. has "you" for *ye*

312. *The swallow and the swift*, etc. Littledale says that "Leodogran's ornithology is open to question." An ornithologist might object to the *near* in a scientific description; but the swallows and the swifts are groups of the same family, and in some parts of England the common swift is popularly known as the "black swallow." Tennyson was probably as familiar with the strict classification of the birds as Littledale, who elsewhere (p. 98) pays a tribute to the poet's knowledge in that line. See on *Gareth and Lynette*, 779.

362. *Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the mage.* The elves that fairies were supposed to leave in exchange for the human babies they stole could sometimes be recognized as *changelings* by their shrivelled and shrunken appearance — "like little old men," as the stories have it. Cf. *Gareth and Lynette*, 200: "But only changeling out of Fairyland."

379. *Till last, a ninth one*, etc. The old Welsh poets make the ninth wave larger than its predecessors, as the Romans did the tenth.

401. *Riddling triplets of old time.* "The tercet rhymes in which many of the bardic poems, as well as the later Breton songs, are written" (Littledale).

421. *Again to come.* Cf. Malory (xxi. 7): "Yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesu in another place. And men say that he shall come again, and he shall win the holy cross. I will not say it shall be so, but rather I will say, here in this world he changed his life. But many men say that there is written upon his tomb the verse, *Hic jacet Arthurus, Rex quondam Rexque futurus.*"

431. *The hind fell, the herd was driven.* The peasant was slain, and the cattle carried off as plunder.

442. *But the King stood out in heaven.* The 1st ed. has "and" for *but.*

452. *Dubric, the high saint.* Archbishop of Caerleon-upon-Usk, primate of Britain, and legate of the Pope.

459–469. *Far shone the fields of May. . . . I love thee to the death.* These eleven lines were not in the 1st ed.

475–505. *So Dubric said; . . . as of yore.* For these thirty-one lines the 1st ed. had only these three: —

> "Then at the marriage feast came in from Rome,
> The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
> Great lords, who claim'd the tribute as of yore."

481–501. *Blow trumpet*, etc. Stopford Brooke calls this marriage and coronation song "a piece of glorious literature." He adds: "It embodies the thought of the poem, grips the whole meaning of it together. And its sound is the sound of martial triumph, of victorious weapons in battle, and of knights in arms. We hear in the carefully varied chorus, in the very rattle and shattering of the vowels in the words, the beating of axe on helm and shield on shield. Rugged, clanging, clashing lines — it is a splendid effort of art. King Olaf might have sung it.

"We hear its contrast in Merlin's song [402–410], as soft and flowing as the other was braving and broken, and we think with gratitude of the artist who could do both with equal ease. The graciousness of the rivulet-music and soft play of Nature is in the lines of this delicate song, and the gaiety of youth; and mingled with these the deep and favorite thought of Tennyson of the preëxistence of the soul."

The pointing in *Blow trumpet* (as in *Flash brand*, etc., below) is Tennyson's. He often omits the comma before a vocative, but we take it that here *Blow trumpet* is equivalent to "Let the trumpet blow."

This "imperative subjunctive," or whatever it may be called, is common in Shakespeare and other Elizabethan writers. Some may prefer to regard *trumpet* as the object of *Blow*. In that case, *Fall* is used in the archaic transitive sense, as often in Shakespeare. Cf. *The Tempest*, ii. 1. 291: "To fall it on Gonzalo"; *Id.* v. 1. 64: "Mine eyes . . . Fall fellowly drops," etc.

507. *To wage my wars*, etc. The 1st ed. had "fight" for *wage*.

Littledale remarks here: "In the curt answer to the Roman envoys, and the words 'Arthur strove with Rome,' the poet in a few lines disposes of an amount of pseudo-history that occupies nearly half of Geoffrey's entire narrative. But even Tennyson's brief allusion to Arthur's Roman war has no foundation in history. The Britons were too weak to 'drive the heathen,' the Picts and Scots, from the Roman wall themselves, and hence they called in the Saxons to help them after the Romans had finally declined to afford further aid. This tribute even is a myth. Milton demolishes the legend that Arthur strove with Rome (*Hist. Eng.* iii.)."

GARETH AND LYNETTE.

This Idyll was first published in 1872. A note in that edition says.—

"With this poem the Author concludes THE IDYLLS OF THE KING.

"GARETH follows THE COMING OF ARTHUR, and THE LAST TOURNAMENT precedes GUINEVERE."

The addition of *Balin and Balan* in 1885 was evidently an afterthought. In 1872 the *Enid* had not been divided, and the author's plan then included only ten poems instead of the present twelve, which fulfil the suggestion in the introduction to the *Morte d'Arthur* of 1842: "His epic, his King Arthur, some twelve books." He once said to Mr. Knowles: "When I was twenty-four I meant to write a whole great poem on it, and began it in the *Morte d'Arthur*. I said I should do it in twenty years; but the Reviews stopped me. . . . By King Arthur I always meant the soul, and by the Round Table the passions and capacities of a man. There is no grander subject in the world than King Arthur."

For the first 430 lines of the present Idyll the poet is indebted to none of the old romances, unless perhaps slightly to the story of Peredur in the Welsh *Mabinogion*. From that point onward he follows Malory (vii.) more or less closely.

3. *Stared at the spate.* At the river in flood or freshet. *Spate* is of Celtic origin. Compare Burns, *The Brigs of Ayr*:—

> "While crashing ice, borne on the roaring spate,
> Sweeps dams an' mills an' brigs a' to the gate."

It is used figuratively in *Jock o' the Side* (*Border Minstrelsy*):—

> "And down the water wi' speed she ran,
> While tears in spates fa' fast frae her e'e."

18. *Heaven yield her for it.* For *yield* in the sense of reward, cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, iv. 2. 33: "And the gods yield you for 't!" and *Hamlet*, iv. 5. 41: "God 'ield you!"

20. *Discaged.* Tennyson is fond of these compounds in *dis-*, like *dislinked*, *disyoked*, *disprinced*, *dishelmed* (all in *The Princess*), etc.

21. *Ever-highering.* *Lower* as a verb is common enough, but *higher*, whether transitive or intransitive, is rare.

25. *Gawain.* The accent of this name seems to be on either syllable as the metre may require.

40. *The goose and golden eggs.* Cf. Tennyson's early poem, *The Goose*.

45. *Thy Book of Hours.* An illuminated prayer-book.

51. *A leash of kings.* Used loosely for a number of kings. A *leash*, meaning originally the cord or thong by which a greyhound was led (cf. *Coriolanus*, i. 6. 38: "a fawning greyhound in the leash"), came to mean a group of *three* persons or things, as three hounds were leashed together. Cf. *1 Henry IV.* ii. 4. 7: "I am sworn brother to a leash of drawers, and can call them by their Christian names, as Tom, Dick, and Francis."

84. *Red berries charm the bird.* That is, allure the bird. Cf. Goldsmith, *She Stoops to Conquer*: "he would charm the bird from the tree."

100. *For, mother*, etc. This use of *for* in beginning a story is common in the *Idylls*. Cf. the *Coming of Arthur*, 184, 359, etc.

135. *The idolaters.* The "heathen" of the preceding Idyll, 36, 422, 511, etc.

151. *Kitchen-knaves.* Kitchen boys or servants. *Knave* in Shakespeare and other writers of the time is often found, not only without any sense of disparagement, but even as a term of endearment. Cf. *Julius Cæsar*, iv. 3. 269: "Gentle knave, good night," etc.

152. *Across the bar.* That is, the "buttery-bar" (*Twelfth Night*, i. 3. 74), *across* or over which food and drink were delivered for the dining-hall.

154. *A twelvemonth and a day.* A common expression for a full year, the extra day being added to make the count sure. Cf. *Love's Labour's Lost*, v. 2. 837, 887, etc.

176. *That still had tended on him.* This use of *still* in the sense of continually is common in Elizabethan English. Cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, i. 1. 17:—

> "I should be still
> Plucking the grass to know where sits the wind," etc.

182. *Had kindled into flowers.* Cf. *Œnone*, 94: "And at their feet the crocus brake like fire;" and *Dream of Fair Women*, 71:—

> "And at the root thro' lush green grasses burn'd
> The red anemone."

185. *Camelot.* The capital of Arthur. Its situation, like that of many localities in the Arthurian stories, is vaguely indicated; but it was probably at or near the place now called Queen-Camel, in Somersetshire.

198. *Our wise man at home.* The 1st ed. has "wise men."

200. *Changeling.* See on *The Coming of Arthur*, 362, above.

229. *Dragon-boughts.* The coils of the dragons' tails.

248–274. *Then that old Seer*, etc. Cf. Elsdale, *Studies in the Idylls*, p. 24: "The fairy king and fairy queens who come from a sacred mountain *cleft* towards the sunrise [that is, Parnassus], to build the city, are the old mythologies whose birthplace was in the East, the land of the rising sun. From them, besides the religions of the ancient world, are derived poetry, architecture, sculpture; all those elevating and refining arts and sciences which were called into existence mainly and primarily as the expression and embodiment of religious feeling. These, with all that whole circle of unnumbered influences, mental, moral, or religious, derived from the experiences of the past, with which they are associated, constitute the city in which the soul dwells, — the sphere in which it works, and the surrounding atmosphere in which it breathes. . . . The city is built to music; for as the harmony and proportion of sound constitute music, so the harmony and proportion of all the various elements and powers which go to make up the man will constitute a fitting shrine for the ideal soul. 'Therefore never built at all;' for the process of assimilating and working up into one harmonious whole all the various external elements is continually going on and unending. 'Therefore built for ever;' for since harmonious and proportionate development is the continual law, the city will always be complete and at unity with itself." Perhaps this is to "consider too curiously" concerning the details of the poetic allegory.

249. *I have seen the good ship sail*, etc. Referring to the effects of mirage.

258. *And built it to the music of their harps.* Cf. *Œnone*, 39: —

> "as yonder walls
> Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed;"

Tithonus, 62: —

> "Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing
> While Ilion like a mist rose into towers;"

and *Tiresias*, 96: "the song-built towers and gates" (of Thebes; cf. Tennyson's *Amphion*). See also Milton, *P. L.* i. 710: —

> "Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
> Rose, like an exhalation, with the sound
> Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet."

280. *The Riddling of the Bards.* Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, 401: "riddling triplets of old time;" and see note.

293. *Not she, nor I.* As Littledale remarks, "Gareth's grammar becomes a little confused."

314. *Delivering doom.* Administering justice.

330. *Yet, for the field*, etc. This use of *for* (= because) is archaic. Cf. Shakespeare, *Sonnet* 54: —

> "But, for their virtue only is their show,
> They live unwoo'd and unrespected die," etc.

333. *Whether would ye?* Which of the two would you have? Another archaism. Cf. *Matthew*, xxi. 31; and the adverbial use, as in *Mark*, ii. 9, etc.

351. *Standeth seized of.* Is in possession of; a legal technicality.

355. *Wreak me.* Avenge me. The verb formerly took an object of either the offender or the offence, but is now rarely used except in such expressions as "wreak vengeance," "wreak his rage," etc. Cf. 800 below.

359. *Sir Kay.* "The Thersites of the old Romance-writers" (Littledale).

362. *The wholesome boon of gyve and gag.* Alluding to the ducking-stool (to which the woman was fastened) and branks of the olden time, with which scolds were disciplined.

367. *Aurelius Emrys.* See on *The Coming of Arthur*, 13.

376. *The messenger of Mark.* Malory calls Mark "a King of Cornwall," and represents him at first as a friend of Arthur; but in the *Idylls* he is the enemy of the King throughout.

380. *A field of charlock.* The wild mustard (*Brassica Sinapistrum*), the flowers of which are yellow.

383. *Delivering.* Reporting. Cf. *The Tempest*, ii. 1. 45: "as he most learnedly delivered;" *Id.* v. 1. 313: "I 'll deliver all," etc.

386. *His goodly cousin Tristram.* "*Cousin* seems to be here used, as in Malory and our older writers generally, in the sense of kinsman" (Littledale). Shakespeare applies it to nephew, niece, brother-in-law, grandchild, etc. Tristram was the son of Mark's sister.

387. *And, for himself was of the greater state*, etc. And because he was of higher rank than Tristram he thought that the King would yield him the right of the "large honor" of knighthood. See on 330 above.

405. *Blazon'd.* Meaning that the heraldic *colors* were added to the carving. Cf. *Uhland's Poems* (Skeat's translation):—

> "In colors bright and fair
> Each warrior's name and scutcheon is duly blazoned there."

411. *Reave.* Deprive. The participle *reft* is still in use.

422. *Lest we should lap him up in cloth of lead.* Alluding to the use of lead for coffins. Compare Richard Barnfield's verses, ascribed to Shakespeare in *The Passionate Pilgrim*: "All thy friends are lapp'd in lead." For *lap* (wrap, enfold), compare *The Princess*, vi. 118: "Half-lapt in glowing gauze and golden brede," etc.

441. *But so thou wilt no goodlier, etc.* The 1st ed. has "an" for *so*.

445. *Root-bitten by white lichen.* The roots becoming diseased by the parasitic growth.

Lo ye now, etc. Cf. Malory (vii. 1): "Then the King betook him to Sir Kay, the steward, and charged him that he should give him meat and drinks of the best, and also that he had all manner of finding as though he was a lord's son. That shall little need, said Sir Kay, to do such cost upon him; for I dare undertake he is a villain born, and never will make man, for and he had come of gentlemen he would have asked of you horse and armour, but such as he is, so he asketh. And since he hath no name, I shall give him a name that shall be Beau-

mains, that is Fair Hands, and into the kitchen I shall bring him, and there he shall have fat browis every day, that he shall be as fat by the twelvemonth's end as a pork hog." *Browis*, or *brewis*, is broth.

454. *Fluent hair.* *Fluent* is literally *flowing*, but the word is rarely used in prose except with reference to language.

455. *And hands Large, fair, and fine.* Malory describes him as "the fairest and largest handed that ever man was."

483. *How the King had saved his life*, etc. Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, 130, above.

490. *On Caer-Eryri's highest found the King.* On the summit of Snowdon; referring to another legend concerning the birth of Arthur. "*Caer-Eryri* literally means, in Welsh, Snowdon Field" (Littledale).

492. *The Isle Avilion.* The "Isle of Apples"—the "Avalon" of *The Palace of Art*, 107:—

> "Or mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son
> In some fair space of sloping greens
> Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,
> And watch'd by weeping queens."

See also *The Passing of Arthur*, 427: "the island-valley of Avilion," etc. It was said in later times to be Glastonbury in Somersetshire, but in the *Idylls* it is somewhat vaguely localized. See on 185 above.

508. *He, by two yards*, etc. Cf. Malory (vii. 2); "and where were any masteries [contests of skill] done thereat would he be, and there might none cast bar or stone to him by two yards."

515. *So for a month*, etc. In the *Morte Darthur* he serves the full year.

524. *A ragged oval.* A rough imitation of the lists of the tournaments.

528. *To Peter's knee.* To the very gate of heaven.

539. *The good mother let me know thee here.* In the *Morte Darthur* she does not do this.

561. *Have I not earn'd my cake*, etc. The metaphor is a reminiscence of his kitchen vassalage.

571. *The lions on thy shield.* Cf. *Lancelot and Elaine*, 658: "Sir Lancelot's azure lions crown'd in gold," etc.

575. *May-blossom.* Cf. Longfellow, *Wreck of the Hesperus*:—

> "And her bosom white as the hawthorn buds
> That ope in the month of May."

For *may* as the white hawthorn, cf. *The Miller's Daughter*, 130: "The lanes, you know, were white with may" (often misprinted "May;") and *Guinevere*, 22: "Green-suited, but with plumes that mock'd the may."

586. *That best blood*, etc. The sacramental wine, symbolizing the blood of Christ.

595. *And comelier than myself.* There is a touch of self-conceit in his, in keeping with Lynette's character.

596. *Castle Perilous.* "The old romances contain many such names as *Castle Perilous*. Thus in the *Morte Darthur* we find the Forest

Perilous, the Chapel Perilous, the Perilous Lake, the Siege (seat) Perilous, and this Castle Perilous, near the Isle of Avilion. Similarly we have the Dolorous Stroke, the Dolorous Tower, and the Dolorous Gard" (Littledale).

607. *A holy life.* That of a nun, the bride of Christ. Cf. *Saint Agnes' Eve*, 23: "Draw me, thy bride," etc.

619. *Morning-Star*, etc. These three names are in apposition with the preceding *Day*.

626. *Scape.* Not printed *'scape* in this archaic style, as it is not a contraction of *escape* but an independent form (cf. *state* and *estate*) often found in Elizabethan prose.

642. *The may-white.* Misprinted "May-white" in the English eds. See on 575 above.

651. *That gave upon a range*, etc. That is, opened upon or commanded a view of (the French *donner sur*); as in *The Princess*, i. 226:—

> "rooms which gave
> Upon a pillar'd porch," etc.

637. *Counter.* Opposite. Cf. *Aylmer's Field*, 282:—

> "Withdrawing by the counter door to that
> Which Leolin open'd."

658. *High that*, etc. *That* for *so that* is common in Shakespeare and other Elizabethan writers.

673. *Jewell'd harness.* Littledale quotes *The Foresters*, ii. 2: "Beetles' jewel armor." See also the fine description in *The Two Voices* of the dragon-fly emerging from the chrysalis:—

> "from head to tail
> Came out clear plates of sapphire mail."

675. *Then as he donn'd the helm*, etc. The 1st ed. has "while" for *as*, and "and" for *while* in 679 below.

688. *Being named.* That is, when called by his name.

693. *Hath past his time.* Has lapsed into dotage.

695. *For an your fire be low*, etc. The play on the literal and figurative sense of *fire* is obvious.

710. *Kay, wherefore wilt thou*, etc. The 1st ed. has "will ye," etc.

729. *A foul-flesh'd agaric in the holt.* An ill-smelling fungus in the wood. Cf. *Edwin Morris:* "names of agaric, moss, and fern."

733. *Avoid.* For the intransitive use, cf. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, iv. 1. 142: "Avoid! no more!" etc.

739. *Have at thee then.* Take care, be on your guard (a warning of onset or attack); frequent in Elizabethan English, both literally and figuratively (as "Have at you with a proverb!" in *The Comedy of Errors*, iii. 1. 51, etc.).

749. *Unhappiness.* Mischance, bad luck. In the *Morte Darthur* (vii. 5) the damsel says: "Nay truly, for thou slewest him unhappily and cowardly, therefore turn again foul kitchen page."

766. *Beknaved.* Called knave. Cf. Gay, *Beggar's Opera*: "The lawyer beknaves the divine," etc.

779. *Round as the red eye of an eagle-owl.* "The comparison between the pool gleaming red in the twilight and the eye of an eagle-owl, burning round and bright in the darkness, may have the fault of being too uncommon to really illustrate the description, but it is a simile that an ornithologist can appreciate. Indeed, a book might be written on the bird lore of Tennyson, as has been well done by Mr. Harting in the case of Shakespeare" (Littledale). See on *The Coming of Arthur*, 312 above.

780. *And shouts.* The 1st ed. has "and cries."

796. *Oilily bubbled up.* The correspondence of sound and sense is o be noted.

800. *Wreak'd themselves.* See on 355 above.

804. *Wan water.* As Littledale suggests, this expression may be from Malory's "waves wan" (xxi. 5), if *wan* is there an adjective; or from the metrical *Morte Darthur*: "waters deep and waves wan." Cf. "wan wave" in *The Passing of Arthur*, 129.

806. *Grimly.* Grim, hideous; rare as an adjective. Cf. *Marmion*, iv. 440: "So grimly and so ghast."

807. *Good now, ye have saved a life.* For the vocative use of *good* (my good fellow), with or without *now*, cf. *Hamlet*, i. 1. 70: "Good now, sit down and tell me, he who knows;" *The Tempest*, v. 1. 3: "Good, speak to the mariners," etc.

811. *For the deed's sake*, etc. Cf. 559 above.

813. *But wilt thou yield this damsel harborage?* The 1st. ed. has "will ye yield." Two lines below, it has "Ye" for *You*, as in some passages further on; but oftener *you* in the early eds. is changed to *ye*.

829. *And there they placed a peacock in his pride*, etc. "Lynette is to be reminded by the peacock in his pride that ladies should be loving and gentle to their champions a lesson she stands rather in need of" (Littledale). The bird was constantly the object of the solemn vows of the knights; and when it was served at table, "all the guests, male and female, took a solemn vow; the knights vowing bravery, and the ladies engaging to be loving and faithful" (Stanley, *History of Birds*).

839. *Frontless.* Shameless, unabashed. Cf. Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, iv. 2:—

> "The most prodigious and most frontless piece
> Of solid impudence."

844. *A villain fitter to stick swine.* Cf. Malory (vii. 5): "Fie, fie, said she, sir knight, ye are uncourteous to set a kitchen page afore me, him beseemeth better to stick a swine than to sit afore a damsel of high parentage."

852. *Whether thou be kitchen-knave, or not.* The 1st ed. has "ye" for *thou*.

862. *For thine avail.* For your advantage. The expression is from Malory, though not just here in the story. In the account of the next day's adventures, the damsel says to Gareth, "Also I say it for thine avail, yet mayest thou turn again," etc.

871. *Lion and stoat have isled together*, etc. Littledale remarks: "It is a well known fact that wild animals, under the influence of terror of either water or fire, will take refuge on the same place and not molest one another. There are some famous pictures of the Deluge

that illustrate such occurrences. Malory (ix. 40) makes Sir Dinadan say 'And a wolf and a sheep were together in prison, the wolf would suffer the sheep to be in peace.'"

873. *Some ruth.* Some pity or compassion. Cf. Milton, *Lycidas*, 163: "Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth;" Scott, *Lady of the Lake*, v. 364: "Now, truce, farewell! and, ruth, begone!" etc.

881. *Hers who lay among the ashes*, etc. The allusion to Cinderella is not an anachronism, as the story is very ancient and widespread in Europe.

889. *Lent-lily in hue.* The daffodil is called the *Lent-lily* because it blossoms about the time of Lent. Cf. *The Winter's Tale*, iv. 4. 120: —

> "daffodils,
> That come before the swallow dares, and take
> The winds of March with beauty."

See also *The Princess*, ii. 303: "an April daffodilly;" and the note in our ed. p. 160.

894. *The champion thou hast brought.* The 1st. ed. has "ye have brought."

908. *The stone Avanturine.* A kind of quartz with spangles of mica in it. A better spelling is *aventurine*, on account of its derivation (Italian *avventurino*, from *avventura*, chance; the glass imitation having been discovered by accident).

921–927. *Said Gareth*, etc. Cf. Malory (vii. 11): "Damsel, said Beaumains, a knight may little do that may not suffer a damsel; for whatsoever ye said unto me I took none heed to your words, for the more ye said the more ye angered me, and my wrath I wreaked upon them that I had ado withal."

922. *Liefer had I fight.* I had rather fight. See our ed. of *As You Like It*, p. 139, note on *Had as lief.*

928. *When mounted.* The eds. down to 1884 at least have "being mounted."

934. *Lightly.* Quickly; an archaism. Cf. the *Morte Darthur*, vii. 12: "Lightly they avoided their horses," etc.

935. *Dog, thou liest*, etc. Cf. Malory (ix 7): "Thou liest, said Beaumains, I am a gentleman born, and of more high lineage than thou, and that will I prove on thy body."

970. *And then she sang*, etc. "Lynette has now seen that he is a gentleman and no knave, and admiration of his valor awakens a different feeling in her heart. Her songs conceal rather than reveal this dawning love; maiden modesty will not permit her to abate one jot of her missavings and revilings. Her first song indicates the sudden light that has dawned upon her: her morning dream has once proved true, that her love would smile on her that day. . . . After the Sun has been overthrown, her love has smiled on her twice; her dream that she would find a victorious champion that day — a knight who would achieve her quest and become her love — has been twice proved true. . . . [After the victory over the Evening Star] thrice hath her dream come true — or rather three omens have now proved her dream true — her dream of a victorious and loving champion" (Littledale).

979. *Their fool's parable.* Their silly symbolism of the Day, etc. Cf. 1059 and 1169 below.

996. *You should worship me the more.* That is, honor me. The 1st ed. has "ye" for *you*.

1002. *The flower*, etc. The dandelion. Cf. *The Poet:* "like the arrow-seeds of the field-flower;" and *Aylmer's Field*, 93:—

> "Or from the tiny pitted target blew
> What look'd a flight of fairy arrows."

1008. *What doest thou, brother*, etc. He thinks that his brother has come within his *marches* (limits), as Gareth is bearing the shield that he had taken from the Morning Star.

1023. *But he that fought no more.* The 1st ed. has: "that would not fight."

1033. *Unhappiness.* Cf. 749, above.

1048. *The boar hath rosemaries and bay.* This was the old custom. Littledale quotes Percy's *Reliques*, ii. 347:—

> "Where stood a boar's head garnished
> With bays and rosemary."

1099. *Foredooming.* Being apprehensive.

1100. *For he seem'd as one*, etc. To illustrate the material by the immaterial is rare in figurative language. Cf. *The Princess*, vii. 199:—

> "Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,
> That like a broken purpose waste in air."

See also our ed. of *Lady of the Lake*, p. 214, note on 28.

Elsdale, in his elaborate analysis of the allegory, takes the hardened skin of the knight to represent those indurated habits of a lifetime that become so unalterable at last. If he is right, the simile here is aptly introduced.

1118 *The buoy.* The object of "can bring under" (submerge) implied with *Southwesterns*.

1130. *O trefoil.* The three-leaved clover.

1141. *Mazed my wit.* Bewildered my mind. Cf. *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, ii. 1. 113: "The mazed world . . . now knows not which is which."

1142. *You be not all to blame.* The 1st ed. has "ye" for *you* here and in the next line; also "yield thee," "thy quest," and "Ye said," in the following lines.

1151. *Thy foul sayings fought for me.* Cf. 925 above.

1156. *Lets down his other leg.* After long standing on one leg, as the heron has the habit of doing.

1163 *A narrow comb.* A *comb* (Celtic) is a "hollow in a hillside," or "the head of a valley."

1172. *In letters like to those the vexillary*, etc. Referring to the Latin inscription carved by the vexillary, or standard-bearer, of the second legion upon a cliff overhanging the little river Gelt near Brampton in Cumberland. A detachment of this legion appears to have been stationed there in 207 A. D.

1174. *Phosphorus*, etc. The words mean Morning Star, Midday, Evening Star, Night, and Death. Littledale remarks that the picture of the Soul, chased by the five emblems of Time, and fleeing to the hermit's cave, recalls Young's words in the *Night Thoughts*: "Man flies from Time, and Time from man."

1184. *The damsel's headlong error*, etc. *Error* is used in its etymological sense of wandering. Cf. Spenser, *F. Q.* iii. 9. 41: —

> "Where he through fatall errour long was led
> Full many yeares, and weetless wandered
> From shore to shore," etc.

1186. *His blue shield-lions*, etc. See 571 above; and cf. *Lancelot and Elaine*, 659: "Sir Lancelot's azure lions," etc.

1227. *O damsel, be you wise*, etc. Here again, as in several places below, "ye" has been changed to *you*.

1281. *Arthur's Harp*. According to Littledale, this "denotes a star that lies near the Pole-star and Arcturus, the three forming a triangle like a harp" — which makes the *Harp* a group of stars. Arcturus is so far from the Pole-star that no star could well be "near" both of them; and from the allusion in *The Last Tournament*, 331, we should infer that a single star, and not a group or constellation, was meant: —

> "'Dost thou know the star
> We call the Harp of Arthur up in heaven?'
> And Tristram, 'Ay, Sir Fool, for when our King
> Was victor wellnigh day by day, the knights,
> Glorying in each new glory, set his name
> High on all hills, and in the signs of heaven.'"

1318. *Fineness*. The French *finesse*.

1336. *Came lights and lights*. That is, they appeared here and there in succession. Cf. *sold and sold* in *The Marriage of Geraint*, 641.

1347. *Barren ribs*. Bare ribs, painted, like the *white breast-bone*, upon his armor.

1348. *With fleshless laughter*. That is, a "grinning skull."

1366. *And Death's dark war-horse bounded*, etc. The 1st ed. reads: "At once the black horse bounded," etc.

1367. *Blink the terror*. Shrink from looking at it.

1386. *Then sprang the happier day from underground*. The poet seems to write *underground* and *under ground* interchangeably, both forms being found several times in the English editions.

1392. *He that told the tale in older times*. Malory; *he that told it later* being Tennyson himself. See on *The Coming of Arthur*, 94, above.

THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT.

For the history of the Idyll, see p. 179 above. The story is from the *Mabinogion* of Lady Charlotte Guest, a collection of ancient Welsh tales (London, 1838–49). As Littledale states, "a French translation from the same source that Lady Guest has followed — the *Llyfe Coch o Hergest* — will be found in M. de Villemarqué's *Table Ronde*, under

the title of *Ghérent, ou le Chevalier au Faucon*." Littledale gives long extracts from the Welsh tale (pp. 114–127), showing how the poet "has touched and at times transmuted his materials." He adds: "The changes made by Tennyson are all in the direction of ornateness. The simplicity of the old story is still to a certain degree preserved in the *idyllic* tone that pervades the poem, but the touches given by the poet impart a richness, a color and variety, that greatly augment the beauty of the tale."

39. *To cleanse this common sewer*, etc. This line is repeated in the next Idyll, 894.

40. *A fair permission to depart.* Cf. *The Merchant of Venice*, i. 2. 121: "God give them a fair departure!"

70. *Sleeping each by either.* The ed. of 1859 has "each by other."

77. *As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone*, etc. The simile, like so many others of Tennyson's drawn from water, illustrates his minute observation of nature. Nothing could be more aptly descriptive than the comparison here. Some of the critics have thought it to be taken from Theocritus, but, as Littledale remarks, the simile of the Sicilian poet is quite different. Calverley translates the Greek thus: —

> "Broad were his shoulders, vast his orbed chest,
> And nigh the shoulder on each brawny arm
> Stood out the muscles, huge as rolling stones
> Caught by some rain-swoln river and shapen smooth
> By its wild eddyings."

93. *Far liefer had I*, etc. See on *Gareth and Lynette*, 922, above.

124. *At this he hurl'd his huge limbs out of bed.* The 1859 ed. has "snatch'd" for *hurl'd*.

130. *And thou, put on thy worst and meanest dress.* In the 1859 ed. the pronouns are "you" and "your;" and in 133 "you" for *thee*.

136. *A cedarn cabinet.* Cf. *Recollections of Arabian Nights*, 115: "the carven cedarn doors." Here, as there, *cedarn* is properly used (after the analogy of *leathern*, *wooden*, etc.) to denote something made of cedar. Milton (*Comus*, 990) uses it of the natural tree: "About the cedarn alleys."

138. *With sprigs of summer*, etc. As English housewives now put sprigs of lavender among linen and other fabrics when laid away.

145. *For Arthur*, etc. The story really starts here, the preceding lines belonging at the beginning of the next Idyll.

146. *Held court at old Caerleon upon Usk.* "The romances very frequently mention these 'plenary courts' (*cours plenières*), which were customarily held by the monarchs of France and England at the principal feasts of Easter, Whitsuntide, and Christmas. The *Forest of Dean*, in Gloucestershire, was anciently a very extensive tract of country west of the Severn; it now comprises about 22,000 acres and belongs to the Crown" (Littledale).

149. *With notice of a hart*, etc. In the Welsh story the forester who brings the news says: "He is of pure white, Lord, and he does not herd with any other animal through stateliness and pride, so royal is his bearing. And I come to seek thy counsel, Lord, and to know thy will concerning him."

186. *King Arthur's hound of deepest mouth.* Cf. *1 Henry VI.* ii.

4. 12: "Between two dogs, which hath the deeper mouth;" and *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, iv. 1. 128: "match'd in mouth like bells, Each under each."

202. *Whereat Geraint*, etc. The 1859 ed. has "at which" for *whereat*, as also in 283 below. Similarly, in 243 "of which" has been changed to *whereof*.

217. *I will track this vermin to their earths.* The use of *vermin* as at once collective and plural is archaic.

244. *White from the mason's hand.* That is, recently built. Cf. 460 below.

274. *A thousand pips eat up your sparrow-hawk!* Littledale says that "the disease called the *pip*, which attacks young fowls, seems to be confused with another disease called *gapes*." He adds: "As pips are not insects, they cannot eat up sparrow-hawks." But *eat* need not be taken literally, and *thousand* is merely intensive. The meaning apparently is, May the worst kind of pip destroy your sparrow-hawk!

309. *This hedgerow thief.* Because, like the sparrow-hawk, he preys on those weaker than himself.

322. *Monstrous ivy-stems*, etc. Such as may be seen on many an old castle in England. The *hairy fibred arms*, and the snake-like twisted roots, are true to nature.

347. *Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel*, etc. "The metrical structure of the song is original, but seems intended to convey a suggestion or reminiscence of the troubadour rondels and villanelles, such as a high-born maiden might have sung in an old baronial bower" (Littledale).

355. *For man is man and master of his fate.* "Man is able to stand, though free to fall, not the creature of blind necessity." Compare *Julius Cæsar*, i. 2. 140:—

> "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
> But in ourselves, that we are underlings;"

and Spenser, *F. Q.* vi. 8. 30: "Each man unto himself his life may fortunise."

364. *Vermeil-white.* White tinged with red. Cf. Spenser, *F. Q.* ii. 3. 22:—

> "And in her cheekes the vermeill red did shew
> Like roses in a bed of lillies shed;"

Milton, *Comus*, 752: "a vermeil-tinctured lip;" Keats, *Endymion*, i.: "Daisies, vermeil-rimm'd and white," etc. *Vermeil* is now used only in poetry.

368. *By God's rood.* By the cross of Christ. Cf. *Hamlet*, iii. 4. 14: "No, by the rood, not so," etc. We have the word in the name of *Holyrood Palace*, Edinburgh.

386. *A costrel.* A flagon, flask, or bottle, made of leather or earthenware, sometimes called "pilgrim's bottle." Here it holds the *wine*, not the *flesh*, which is brought, though it is possible (as Littledale thinks) that the poet forgot it was a vessel for holding liquids only. In the Welsh tale it contains mead, not the meat mentioned in the same sentence: "And behold! the maiden came back, and a youth with her,

bearing on his back a costrel full of good purchased mead, and a quarter of a young bullock. And in the hands of the maiden was a quantity of white bread, and she had some manchet bread in her veil, and she came into the chamber. 'I could not obtain better than this,' said she, 'nor with better should I have been trusted.' 'It is good enough,' said Geraint."

389. *Manchet bread.* The finest kind of white bread. Cf. Drayton *Polyolbion*:—

> "No manchet can so well the courtly palate please
> As that made of the meal fetched from my fertile leas;
> The finest of that kind, compared with my wheat,
> For fineness of the bread, doth look like common cheat."

Cheat, or *cheat-bread*, was a coarser kind of wheaten bread.

421. *But if ye know*, etc. The 1859 ed. has "you know."

440. *Limours.* He appears again in *Geraint and Enid*, 277.

443. *The wild land.* The marches of Geraint's territory. See *Geraint and Enid*, 28 fol.

475. *That if the sparrow-hawk, this nephew, fight.* The ed. of 1859 reads: "That if, as I suppose, your nephew fight." In 479 the early reading was: "and therefore at your asking, yours."

481. *Except the lady he loves best be there.* This was a common condition for admission to a tourney or a castle. Cf. Spenser, *F. Q.* iv. i. 9:—

> "The custome of that place was such, that hee
> Which hadde no love nor lemman there in store,
> Should either winne him one, or lye without the dore."

483. *And over these is placed*, etc. The 1859 ed. has "laid" for *placed;* and the next line reads: "And over that is placed the sparrow-hawk."

493. *But thou, that hast no lady.* Originally, "you that have;" and in 495, "Your leave!"

507. *Had stolen away.* Originally, "had slipt away."

533. *Contemplating her own unworthiness.* The accent of *contemplating* is on the second syllable; but in *The Palace of Art*, 212, on the first: "But contemplating all."

543. *The Chair of Idris.* The mountain, Cader-Idris, in Merionethshire, the highest in Wales (2914 feet) next to Snowdon. Idris, according to the old legends, was one of the three Primitive Bards (Eidiol and Beli being the others) and the inventor of the harp.

550. *The golden sparrow-hawk.* Originally, "a golden sparrow-hawk."

566. *A clapping as of phantom hands.* The explanation has been suggested, "that the applause of the crowd was echoed back from the walls, and sounded like the clapping of phantom hands;" but this was impossible. This crowd at the tourney would not dare to express their joy that the usurper was not, as usual, winning an easy victory, while his final defeat was still uncertain; but friends of the old earl, at some distance from the lists but within sight of them, might venture to indulge

in subdued applause of the stranger knight who was holding the tyrant at bay and would perhaps overcome him.

576. *Edyrn, son of Nudd.* He reappears in *Geraint and Enid*, 780 fol.

581. *First thou thyself, with damsel and with dwarf.* The 1859 ed. has: "thou thyself, thy lady and thy dwarf;" and, in the next line, "being" for *coming*.

593. *And, being young, he changed*, etc. The reading of 1859 was: —

> "And, being young, he changed himself and grew
> To hate the sin, that seem'd so like his own,
> Of Modred, Arthur's nephew, and fell at last
> In the great battle fighting for the King."

615. *And still she look'd, and still the terror grew.* This recalls Goldsmith's "And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew," etc.

641. *Being sold and sold.* That is, sold one after another.

661. *A turkis.* One of the old spellings of *turquoise*, indicating what is still one of the authorized pronunciations.

672. *Mixen.* Dunghill (archaic).

714. *Our fortune swerved from sun to shade.* The early eds. have "slipt" for *swerved*.

724. *A ragged-robin.* A red wild-flower, also called *cuckoo-flower* (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*). As Littledale remarks, the old lady "is thinking less of the literal wild-flower than of a ragged beggar-girl from the roadside." Cf. 230 above.

731. *That lighted on Queen Esther*, etc. See *Esther*, ii. 2–9.

742. *That maiden in the tale.* The tale is in the *Mabinogion*. Math says to Gwydion: "Well, we will seek, I and thou, by charms and illusion, to form a wife for him out of flowers . . . so they took the blossoms of the oak, and the blossoms of the broom, and the blossoms of the meadow-sweet, and produced from them a maiden, the fairest and most graceful that man ever saw. And they baptized her, and gave her the name of Blodeuwedd"

744. *The bride of Cassivelaun*, etc. According to the Welsh tradition, it was the love of a British maiden named Flur, who was betrothed to Casswallawn (or Cassivelaunus), that led Cæsar to invade Britain. She was carried off by a Gallic prince, an ally of Cæsar, who thus got possession of her; but she was recaptured by Casswallawn after a battle in which six thousand of Cæsar's army were slain.

764. *Flaws in summer.* Sudden gusts of wind. Cf. *Hamlet*, v. 1. 239 "the winter's flaw;" and Longfellow, *Wreck of the Hesperus*: —

> "And he watch'd how the veering flaw did blow
> The smoke now west, now south."

774. *As careful robins*, etc. The simile is repeated in *Geraint and Enid*, 431.

780. *At thy new son.* Originally, "your new son."

785. *This ruin'd hall.* Originally, "this ruin'd hold;" and, in 787, "kind Queen" for *fair Queen*.

791. *Fain I would*, etc. Originally, "for I wish'd," etc. The next

two lines had "to love" for *should love*, "should" for *can*, and "I had" for *was mine*.

797. *I doubted whether daughter's tenderness.* Originally, "filial tenderness;" and, in the next line, "did" for *might*.

804. *And all its perilous glories.* Originally, "dangerous glories."

811. *Intermitted usage.* Originally, "intermitted custom."

814. *Certain of my prophecy.* Cf. *Geraint and Enid*, 247.

818. *Some gaudy-day.* Some holiday; especially an English university festival. Compare Middleton, *The Black Book:* "Never passing beyond the confines of a farthing, nor once munching commons but only upon gaudy-days."

827. *The giant tower.* Cf. *Pelleas and Ettarre*, 159.

829. *And white sails flying on the yellow sea.* Swinburne remarks: "On the first bright day I ever spent on the eastern coast of England I saw the truth of this touch. . . . There on the dull, yellow, foamless floor of dense, discolored sea, so thick with clotted sand that the water looked massive and solid as the shore, the white sails flashed whiter against it and along it as they fled, and I knew once more the truth of what I had never doubted — that the eye and the hand of Tennyson may always be trusted at once and alike to see and to express the truth."

838. *Dubric.* See on *The Coming of Arthur*, 452.

GERAINT AND ENID.

For the division of the original Idyll, see p. 180 above.

1. *O purblind race*, etc. Cf. Lucretius, ii. 14: —

> "O miseras hominum mentes. O pectora caeca,
> Qualibus in tenebris vitae, quantisque periclis,
> Degitur hoc aevi quodcumquest."

7. *Where we see*, etc. Cf. *1 Corinthians*, xiii. 12.

9. *When they both had got to horse.* Originally, "had both."

14. *I charge thee ride before.* Originally, "you" for *thee;* as also in 16, below.

20. *Effeminate as I am.* A reminiscence of Enid's words in the preceding Idyll, 107.

49. *The great plover's human whistle.* "The shrill call of the stone curlew, or Norfolk plover, which thus often deceives wanderers on the wolds" (Littledale).

68. *Far liefer*, etc. See on *The Marriage of Geraint*, 93, above.

77. *Your warning or your silence.* Originally, "Your silence or your warning." Professor Jones suggests that the first reading was due to the influence of the *Mabinogion*, which has, "I wish but for silence, and not for warning." The poet apparently did not see at the moment of writing that the change from the declarative to the interrogative form required a transposition of the nouns. The correction was made in 1869. In the second and third lines below "you" has been changed to *ye*.

94. *Wolves of woman born.* Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, 32, and see note.

101. *Ruth began to work.* See on *Gareth and Lynette*, 873, above.

151. *As you that not obey me.* The position of *not* is archaic. Cf. *The Tempest*, v. 1. 38: "Whereof the ewe not bites;" *2 Henry IV.* iv. 1. 98: "it not belongs to you," etc.

163. *That had a sapling growing on it, slide*, etc. Originally, "slip" for *slide*.

164. *Windy walls.* Cf. *The Palace of Art*, 72: "Beneath the windy wall."

189. *Disedge.* See on *Gareth and Lynette*, 20, above.

202. *Victual.* The singular is archaic.

213. *Less having stomach for it.* The American 1859 edition reads: "having a stomach." This is not in any English edition, and may be a misprint.

219. *Reddening in extremity of delight.* Cf. *Gareth and Lynette*, 526, above.

221. *Ye will be all the wealthier.* Originally, "You will;" in 228, "you are" for *thou art;* and in 230 and 231, "you" for *thee.*

250. *Another humorous ruth.* That is, pity mixed with amusement. See on 101, above.

267. *Supporters of a shield.* That is, in a coat of arms. *Supporters* is a term of heraldry.

277. *Limours.* See *The Marriage of Geraint*, 440 fol.

291. *And play'd upon it.* Indulged in coarse quibbles, in keeping with the *free* (licentious) *tales.*

301. *She doth not speak to me.* Originally, "does" for *doth*, as also in 323, below. Similarly, "has" has been changed to *hath* in 308 and elsewhere. We shall not attempt hereafter to note all these little changes in auxiliary verbs, nor those of "you" to *ye*, which occur frequently.

336. *Good, speak the word.* My good girl, etc. For the vocative use of *good*, see on *Gareth and Lynette*, 807, above.

338. *Nay, I do not mean blood.* This is suggested by an affrighted look of Enid. *Nay* was originally "no."

340. *My malice is no deeper than a moat*, etc. That is, I mean only to imprison Geraint, not to kill him.

344. *The one true lover whom you ever own'd.* Originally, "which you ever had."

410. *Suddenly honest.* A humorous touch.

426. *Not all mismated*, etc. Originally, "Not quite mismated," etc.

431. *As careful robins*, etc. See the preceding Idyll, 774, above.

461. *A dry shriek.* "The *sicca vox* of the Latin poets," as Mr. J. C. Collins notes (*Illustrations of Tennyson*). Cf. Wordsworth, *Peter Bell*, i.: "The long dry see-saw of his horrible bray."

475. *The cressy islets.* Masses of water-cress. Cf. the *Ode to Memory:* "To purl o'er matted cress and ribbed sand."

582. *Till at the last*, etc. Originally, "And at the last," etc.

631. *The old serpent.* Cf. *Revelation*, xii. 9.

635. *Those gracious things.* As Littledale remarks, this recalls Shakespeare's use of *gracious* to denote "a combination of exquisite physical charm with spiritual dignity and holiness."

650. *Cried out upon.* Cried out against (archaic). Cf. *As You Like It*, ii. 7. 70: "Why, who cries out on pride," etc.

679. *This beggar-woman's weed.* For *weed* in the sense of garment, cf. Milton, *Comus*, 84: "And take the weeds and likeness of a swain;" *L'Allegro*, 120: "weeds of peace" (as in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, iii. 3. 239), etc.

762. *And never yet, since high in Paradise*, etc. Stopford Brooke refers to these as "some of the loveliest lines the poet ever wrote of womanhood." For *the four rivers*, see *Genesis*, ii. 10 fol.

770. *Before the useful trouble of the rain.* "This seems to imply that the 'useful *trouble* of the rain' only came after man's departure from Paradise. This is not exactly stated in *Genesis*, ii., where we read that *before* the plantation of Eden 'the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth. . . . But there went up a mist from the earth,' etc. Milton makes Eve in Eden speak of 'the fertile earth after soft showers'" (Littledale).

782. *Him who gave you life.* See the preceding Idyll, 574 fol.

817. *The bandit.* Used collectively.

820. *A hollow land*, etc. That is, a volcanic region.

902. *The vicious quitch.* A kind of worthless grass, hard to eradicate from cultivated fields. In New England it is often called "witch-grass." Browning, in *Sordello*, speaks of "Docks, quitch-grass, loathly mallows no man plants."

914. *Than if some knight of mine*, etc. Originally, "a knight."

928. *Bala lake.* The largest lake in Wales, though only about four and a half miles long and a mile and a half wide. The *Dee* flows from it. A *southwest* wind blows along the length of the lake towards the end where the river issues.

The Dee is called *sacred*, as in *Lycidas* (55) it is called a "wizard stream," on account of the many legends and superstitions connected with it. Drayton (*Polyolbion*, x.) calls it "ominous" and "hallowed."

932. *On each of all whom Uther left in charge.* Originally, "On whom his father Uther left in charge."

935. *The White Horse on the Berkshire hills.* The English editions print "the white horse." See Thomas Hughes's *Scouring of the White Horse*, — a figure of a horse cut in the turf on the side of a chalk-hill near Wantage in Berkshire, to commemorate Alfred's victory over the Danes in the time of Ethelred.

957. *The spiteful whisper.* See the preceding Idyll, 56–60.

961. *Enid, whom her ladies loved to call*, etc. Originally, "the ladies."

BALIN AND BALAN.

This Idyll was first published in 1885. See p. 180 above. The story is abridged from the second book of Malory's *Morte Darthur*, with the addition of incidents and details that are Tennyson's own.

8. *Man's word is God in man.* See *The Coming of Arthur*, 132, and note.

24. *A flume of lady-fern.* A species of fern (*Asplenium filix-femina*) so called, according to some authorities, because dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Mr. H. Friend (*Flowers and Flower-lore*) says: "Besides this the

maiden-hair variety is in some places called Maria's Fern, and in the countries farther north will be found many names for this class of plants, which prove that they once belonged to Venus or Freyja, and have now been claimed for the Virgin. In Scotland we find one kind of fern called Lady-Bracken."

36. *Proven in his Paynim wars.* That is, in the wars with the "heathen." See *The Coming of Arthur*, 8 fol.

Tennyson uses both the participle *proved* and the illegitimate *proven*. He has *approven* once, but *approved* elsewhere.

51. *Balin, 'the Savage.'* Cf. 479 below.

78. *The lost one found*, etc. Cf. *Luke*, xv. 10, 24.

85. *Twelve battles.* See *Lancelot and Elaine*, 284 fol.

99. *Arimathæan Joseph.* See *Matthew*, xxvii. 57, and cf. 358 fol. below.

120. *Cried out on.* Cried out against, accused. See on *Geraint and Enid*, 630, above.

124. *Black magic.* The use of *black* in this expression and "the black art" is not a mere metaphor, as we might suppose, but originated in the corruption *nigromancy* (as if from the Latin *niger*, black) for *necromancy*.

127. *Blind tongues.* Littledale remarks that the figure recalls Virgil's use of *caecus* (*Æneid*, x. 733) with reference to wounds upon the back. Milton has "blind mouths," in *Lycidas*, 119.

153. *The presence.* That is, the presence of the King, or the court. For the ellipsis, cf. *Henry VIII.* iv. 2. 37 : —

> "i' the presence
> He would say untruths," etc.

191. *Cognizance.* Emblem to be borne on his shield in place of some wild beast with red tongue (*langued gules* in heraldic language) now there. Arthur grants Balin the *crown* as an armorial bearing, though, as he says, it is but *a shadow's shadow*, being only the picture of what is itself an emblem.

226. *Thus, as a hearth*, etc. The 1st ed. has "Then" for *Thus*.

241. *Counter door.* Opposite door. Cf. 411 below.

256. *The maiden Saint*, etc. A silver image of the Virgin Mary, that "female ideal, which acquired an irresistible fascination in the monastic life of celibacy and meditation, and in the strange mixture of gallantry and devotion that accompanied the Crusades" (Lecky). Her emblem was the lily, which denoted spiritual purity.

262. *As hardly tints the blossom of the quince.* An illustration of the poet's keen observation of nature. Cf. the exquisite simile in *The Princess*, v. 188 : —

> "But pure as lines of green that streak the white
> Of the first snowdrop's inner leaves."

329. *The ruinous donjon.* The "donjon tower," or "keep," the inner stronghold of a castle.

330. *Ivy-tods.* Bushes or growths of ivy. Cf. the early reading of the first stanza of *The Miller's Daughter* : —

> "The wealthy miller's mealy face
> Like the moon in an ivy-tod."

334. *For the fairest*, etc. Because the fairest, etc. See on *Gareth and Lynette*, 330, above.

358. *With holy Joseph's legend.* The goblet is embossed with two scenes from the legend of Joseph of Arimathea, — his voyage, and the little church he built at Glastonbury. Cf. *The Holy Grail*, 59 fol.

361. *And one was rough with wattling*, etc. The 1st ed. has: "rough with pole and scaffoldage."

400. *And inward to the wall.* That is, the door was open and turned inward against the wall. He hides behind it for the moment.

405. *The longest lance*, etc. Cf. 110, above.

410. *The blindfold rummage.* The disturbance made by his pursuers, which was *blindfold* because they had lost track of him. Cf. *Hamlet*, i. 1. 107: "Of this post-haste and romage in the land."

425. *I have shamed thee so that now thou shamest me.* "Apparently the killing of Garlon was feloniously done, for Garlon was unarmed and unprepared" (Littledale).

428. *Cast himself all along.* Threw himself down at full length. Cf. *As You Like It*, ii. 1. 30: "as he lay along;" *Julius Cæsar*, iii. 1. 115: "That now on Pompey's basis lies along," etc.

434. *The fire of Heaven has kill'd the barren cold*, etc. Stopford Brooke remarks that this song, glorifying the fire of the appetites and senses, "might have been written for the worship of Astarte, and it is splendidly imagined by Tennyson: it sets the sensual side of pagan Nature-worship into the keenest contrast with the self-control of Christianity. The fire from heaven she speaks of is not the holy fire of the pure spirit; it is the fire of that heaven which some have conceived, and which consists in the full enjoyment of desire. It is this blaze of desire which she sees in all Nature as well as in man, and it creates, she thinks, the real beauty of the world. Tennyson got to the heart of the thing in this exultant pagan song." It shows us Vivien "as she is — honest, true, and bold, confessing evil and rejoicing in it. The whole sketch of her in *Balin and Balan* is of this strain of triumphant daring. Her tale of slander about the Queen is there delivered with a ring of conquest in it. Her mocking of her boy squire and of Balan has the bravery of a queen of sin."

479. *Savage among the savage woods.* Alluding to his title, "Balin the Savage." Cf. 51, above.

548. *Red with sinless blood.* Cf. 110 and 405, above.

568. *Like brainless bulls.* Cf. Malory's description of the combat of Lancelot and Turquine (vi. 8): "Then they hurtled together as two wild bulls, rashing [tearing off; Fr. *arrachant*] and lashing with their shields and swords that sometimes they fell both over their noses." Littledale quotes Spenser, *F. Q.* iv. 4. 18: —

> "As two fierce buls, that strive the rule to get
> Of all the heard, meete with so hideous maine,
> That both rebuted tumble on the plaine;
> So these two Champions to the ground were feld."

574. *The living dog*, etc. See *Ecclesiastes*, ix. 4.

584. *They found the world.* That is, recovered their senses.

616. *Good night, true brother*, etc. Littledale quotes Mrs. Barbauld's lines: —

> "Say not good-night, — but in some brighter clime
> Bid me good-morning."

The same critic remarks: "The four types of malignity in the *Idylls* have now all come upon the scene — the man of envious ambition, rebelling against lawful sway; the man of vice and treachery, hating noble aims; the man of secret slanders, inflicting wounds unseen; and the harlot, delighting in ensnaring others and making them like herself in baseness, — Modred, and Mark, and Garlon, and Vivien."

MERLIN AND VIVIEN.

For the early history of this Idyll, see p 179 above.

The hint of the story is from Malory (iv. 1), who simply tells how "Merlin was assotted [infatuated] and doted on one of the ladies of the lake," whose name was Nimue. He adds: "But Merlin would let her have no rest, but always he would be with her. And ever she made Merlin good cheer till she had learned of him all manner thing that she desired; and he was assotted upon her that he might not be from her. So on a time he told King Arthur that he should not dure long, but should be put in the earth quick. . . . Ah, said the king, since ye know of your adventure, purvey for it, and put away by your crafts that misadventure. Nay, said Merlin, it will not be. So he departed from the king. And within a while the damsel of the lake departed, and Merlin went with her wheresoever she went. And oft times Merlin would have had her privily away by his subtle crafts; then she made him to swear that he should never do none enchantment upon her if he would have his will. And so he sware; so she and Merlin went over the sea unto the land of Benwick. . . . Soon after the lady and Merlin departed, and by the way Merlin showed her many wonders, and came into Cornwall. And always Merlin lay about the lady to have her love, and she was ever passing weary of him, and fain would have been delivered of him, for she was afeard of him because he was a devil's son, and she could not put him away by no means. And so on a time it happed that Merlin shewed to her in a rock whereas was a great wonder, and wrought by enchantment, that went under a great stone. So by her subtle working, she made Merlin to go under that stone to let her wit of the marvels there, but she wrought so there for him that he came never out for all the craft that he could do. And so she departed and left Merlin."

2. *The wild woods of Broceliande.* In Brittany, and famous in legendary lore.

4. *A tower of ivied mason-work.* The 1st ed. (1859) has "ruin'd mason-work." After the next line that edition goes on with "The wily Vivien stole from Arthur's court" (147 below). The long passage that intervenes was first inserted in 1874, when it began thus: —

> "Whence came she? One that bore in bitter grudge
> The scorn of Arthur and his Table, Mark,

> The Cornish King. had heard a wandering voice,
> A minstrel of Caerleon by strong storm
> Blown into shelter by Tintagil, say,"

and then on from line 10 of the present text to 146.

15. *Neither marry*, etc. See *Matthew*, xxii. 30.

40. *As love, if love be perfect*, etc. See *1 John*, iv. 18.

42. *My father died in battle against the King.* To the Queen she says (71 below), "for thy King."

52. *Saith not Holy Writ the same?* See *Job*, xxv. 5, 6.

69. *Of glancing corner.* Watching out of the corner of her eyes though they were cast down.

108. *That gray cricket.* The "minstrel of Caerleon" (9 above).

123. *Diet and seeling, jesses, leash, and lure*, etc. The *diet*, or feeding of the hawks, was regulated strictly.

Seeling was partly sewing up the eyelids of a young hawk, to prevent its seeing men, etc., in front of it, and so becoming alarmed. Hoods came in time to be used instead of seeling.

Jesses were two narrow strips of leather, fastened one to each leg, and attached to a swivel, from which hung the *leash*, or thong.

The *lure* was sometimes a live pigeon, but more usually a piece of iron or wood, generally in the shape of a heart or a horseshoe, to which were attached the wings of some bird, with a piece of raw meat fixed between them. The falconer swung this round his head or threw it to a distance by a thong, and the hawk flew down to it.

She is too noble. The *falcon* was the female; the *tercel* was the male.

Check at pies. Either, leave pursuing a game-bird to follow a magpie that crosses her flight; or, as more usually, fly at worthless birds such as magpies.

Towered. Rose spirally to a height.

Pounced. Swooped down on her.

Quarry. The game flown at.

Her *bells* were globular, of brass or silver, and attached to each leg by *bewits*.

These *terms of art* are from Harting's *Ornithology of Shakespeare*; all might be illustrated from the dramatist.

125. *Nor will she rake.* That is, "fly wide at game."

146. *Death in the living waters.* Poison put into a well or spring. Cf. the note on *The Coming of Arthur*, 13 (p. 190 above).

148. *She hated all the knights*, etc. The 1859 *American* ed. reads:—

> "She loathed the knights, and ever seem'd to hear
> Their laughing comment when her name was named.
> For once, when Arthur walking all alone,
> Vexed at a rumor rife about the Queen,
> Had met her," etc.

This reading is found nowhere else. The American edition was evidently printed from advance sheets, but the poet must have altered the passage before the English edition of 1859 was printed. The 1857 reading was:—

> "She hated all the knights because she deem'd
> They wink'd and jested when her name was named."

187. *Then fell on Merlin a great melancholy.* The 1859 ed. has "fell upon him," etc. The next seven lines are not in that ed., but were added in 1873; and the next line began: "And leaving Arthur's court," etc.

205. *With woven paces and with waving arms.* Referring to the movements and gesticulations associated with the performance of magic rites.

219. *A twist of gold*, etc. The 1st *American* ed. (1859), like *The True and False* (1859), has "snake" for *twist*; but the *English* 1859 ed. has *twist*. The poet must have made the change from "snake" to *twist* after the advance sheets were sent to the American publishers, as he did in 148–151 above.

221. *Her lissome limbs.* Her lithe or supple limbs. *Lissome* is a softened form of *lithesome*. Cf. *The Brook*, 70: "Straight, but as lissome as a hazel wand."

222. *In color like the satin-shining palm*, etc. Another illustration of minute observation of nature. "The *palm*, as the soft bloom of the great sallow is called in some districts, gleams with satiny sheen when blown by the March winds, those 'blasts that blow the poplar white'" (Littledale).

230. *The blind wave feeling round his long sea-hall*, etc. This also is true to nature, describing a slow wave rolling into a cave and winding along its sides without breaking into foam.

233. *O Merlin, do ye love me?* The early reading was "you" for *ye*, as in not a few other places that we shall not take space to note.

237. *Slided up his knee* Tennyson generally has *slid*, but *slided* occasionally, as here, for the metre.

243. *The lists of such a beard*, etc. That is, the edges of it, like the selvage of a woven fabric.

260. *A lovely baleful star.* An astrological allusion.

272. *Dropwise.* The only instance of the word known to us; perhaps the poet's coinage.

277. *Sign of reverence.* That is, venerable appearance. The *goat* would have the long *beard* to give him *that*, and might at least nod his head in recognition of the favor, as Merlin apparently had done, without a *word* of thanks.

280. *Foot-gilt with all the blossom-dust*, etc. That is, with feet covered with yellow pollen from the flowers.

285. *Boon, ay, there was a boon.* The 1859 ed has "yea" for *ay*.

291. *Glass'd in the slippery sand before it breaks.* True to nature, as those can testify who have noticed the momentary reflection of the coming wave in the sand still wet with the preceding wave.

311. *Not yet so strange, etc.* Originally, "Nor yet."

338. *That I should prove it on you unawares.* After this line the 1859 ed. has the line, "To make you lose your use and name and fame" (omitted in 1873); and, in the next line, "most indignant" for *passing wrathful*.

360. *And stirr'd this vice in you which ruin'd man*, etc. The curiosity that led Eve to taste the forbidden fruit.

374. *By God's rood.* Cf. *The Marriage of Geraint*, 368, above.

376. *That ever bided tryst.* That is, waited for her lover.

385. *In love, if love be love*, etc. The song of the lover to his lady. The fifth stanza (444–447) is her reply.

406. *A creature that was current then.* For the archaic *current* (in its etymological sense of running), cf. Milton, *P. L.* vii. 67 : "the current stream."

426. *The fairy well*, etc. In the portion of Brittany identified with *Broceliande* (2) is the Fountain of Baranton, which, as Lady Guest says, "is supplied by a mineral spring, and it bubbles up on a piece of iron or copper being thrown into it. 'Les enfants s'amusent à y jeter des épingles, et disent par commun proverbe, *Ris donc, fontaine de Berendon, et je te donnerai une épingle.*' "

430. *It buzzes fiercely.* The early reading was "buzzes wildly."

459. *Yea! love, though love, etc.* Originally, "True!" for *Yea!*

464. *Counterchanged.* Variegated, diversified. Cf. *In Memoriam*, lxxxix. : —

> "Witch-elms that counterchange the floor
> Of this flat lawn with dark and bright."

465. *Envy calls you devil's son.* Cf. what is said of Merlin in Spenser, *F. Q.* iii. 3. 13 : —

> "And sooth, men say that he was not the sonne
> Of mortal Syre or other living wight,
> But wondrously begotten, and begonne
> By false illusion of a guileful Spright
> On a fair lady Nonne, that whilom hight
> Matilda, daughter to Pub'dius," etc.

472. *Fancied arms.* These may be "described in unheraldic language as an eagle of gold soaring upon a blue surface to a golden sun depicted on the right hand of the upper part of the shield (*dexter*, that is, on the left hand of any one *facing* the shield; the *right hand* of the bearer of the shield who is supposed to be sheltered behind it). As the picture that Merlin substituted is blazoned *proper*, that is, in the natural colors of the objects represented, it is allowable in strict heraldry to place it upon a field azure, in spite of the fundamental heraldic law that forbids metal to be charged on metal or color on color" (Littledale).

477. *A graff.* A graft (archaic). Cf. Shakespeare, *Lucrece*, 1062 : "This bastard graff shall never come to growth."

481. *For you.* As for you. Cf. *Hamlet*, i. 5. 139 : —

> "For your desire to know what is between us,
> O'ermaster it as ye may."

494. *Because I fain*, etc. The 1859 reading was : "I cease I wish'd to give them greater minds."

496. *The sick weak beast*, etc. Cf. Spenser, *F. Q.* i. 4. 30 : —

> "And next to him malicious Envy rode,
> Upon a ravenous wolfe, and still did chaw
> Between his cankred teeth a venomous tode,
> That all the poison ran about his chaw;
> But inwardly he chawed his owne maw
> At neighbours welth, that made him ever sad,

For death it was, when any good he saw;
And wept that cause of weeping none he had;
But when he heard of harme he wexed wondrous glad."

501. *Brake on the mountain.* Originally, "Broke," etc.

507. *The second in a line of stars*, etc. The star in the sword of Orion which is surrounded by the great nebula. It is just below the well-known *belt of three* stars.

510. *Concluded.* Shut up, inclosed; the obsolete etymological sense. Cf. Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, v. 52: "The very person of Christ . . . concluded in the grave."

571. *Magnet-like, she drew*, etc. Littledale sees here "a suggestion of Sindbad's magnet-mountain;" but why assume that the attractive maid is compared to the mountain? The general suggestion of magnetism is sufficient.

576. *Their serpent hands.* Their trunks.

601. *The lady never made unwilling war*, etc. Littledale remarks that Vivien's criticism exactly parallels the remark made to Dr. Johnson by a lady "of great beauty and excellence," after reading the fourth line of Pope's epitaph on Mrs. Corbet. The line in question states that Mrs. Corbet "no arts essayed but not to be admired;" and the lady considered that it contained "an unnatural and incredible panegyric." In fact, Mrs. Corbet never made unwilling war with those fine eyes! "Of this," adds the doctor, "let the ladies judge."

635. *When the lake whiten'd.* When there were "white caps" on the waves, as the modern phrase is.

652. *For keep it like a puzzle chest in chest*, etc. Littledale sees here an allusion to those Chinese puzzles of "laborious orient ivory, sphere in sphere," mentioned in the prologue to *The Princess;* but those are not *chests*, nor are they *locked*, and they cannot be opened, the inner spheres having been carved and detached through the openings in the carving of the outer ones. The reference in the present passage is to sets of chests, or boxes, made to fit one within another, each with its own lock.

690. *Full-fed.* Gluttonous, gross.

701. *Set up the charge.* That is, set it forth, declare it plainly, instead of insinuating it vaguely.

707. *There lay the reckling.* A *reckling* is properly the smallest and weakest in a litter, as of puppies or kittens; here used contemptuously for the puny infant.

726. *That foul bird of rapine.* Slander. Cf. Shakespeare, Sonnet lxx.:—

"The ornament of beauty is suspect,
A crow that flies in heaven's sweetest air,"

where *suspect* (suspicion) is a noun.

737. *The royal rose.* In the stained glass of the window.

751. *Hic Jacets.* "Here Lies;" the inscription on the tombstones, put for the tombstones themselves. The *brasses* of the preceding line are the plates of brass engraved with memorial devices, which were common in the olden time and are still to be seen here and there in Eng-

land and other foreign countries. In most cases the valuable metal has been stolen, leaving only the slab of stone in which it was set.

763. *The holy king*, etc. David.

767. *Friend Traitor or true?* Is he a treacherous friend or a true one?

775. *Fixt her fancy on him.* That is, her love (archaic); a common use of *fancy* in Shakespeare and other Elizabethan writers.

779. *Man! is he man at all*, etc. The 1859 ed. has "Him!" for *Man!* In the next line, *winks* is used in its old sense of shutting one's eyes. Compare Shakespeare, Sonnet xliii.: "When most I wink [in sleep], then do my eyes best see, etc."

785. *The pretty popular name.* That is, of cuckold.

796. *Foach'd filth.* That is, trodden into slush.

811. *Not mount as high*, etc. Cf. 440 above.

816. *She cloaks the scar of some repulse with lies*, etc. The 1859 ed. reads:—

> "I think she cloaks the wounds of loss with lies;
> I do believe she tempted them and fail'd,
> She is so bitter."

In 822 below, it has: "Face-flatterers and back-biters are the same."

821. *Nine tithes of times.* Nine times out of ten.

833. *Her feet of clay.* Apparently suggested by the description of the image in *Daniel*, ii. 32, 33.

839. *Many-winter'd.* Cf. *Locksley Hall*, 68: "As the many-winter'd crow that leads the clanging rookery home."

842. *Leapt from her session on his lap.* This use of *session* is archaic. Compare Hooker, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, v. 55: "his ascension into heaven and his session at the right hand of God," etc.

867. *Seethed like the kid*, etc. See *Exodus*, xxxiv. 26, or *Deuteronomy*, xiv. 21.

884. *Inutterable.* Used in preference to *unutterable* before *unkindliness*, to avoid the repetition of the prefix. Cf. Milton, *P. L.* ii. 626: "Abominable, inutterable, and worse," etc.

907. *Dislink'd herself.* Cf. *The Princess*, prol. 70: "Dislink'd with shrieks and laughter;" and see on *Geraint and Enid*, 189 above.

921. *Lo! what was once*, etc. The 1859 ed. has "Oh!" for *Lo!*

924. *Farewell; think gently of me*, etc. The 1859 reading was:—

> "Farewell; think kindly of me, for I fear
> My fate or fault, omitting graver youth
> For one so old, must be to love you still.
> But ere I leave you," etc.

934. *Javelining.* The verb is rare; perhaps Tennyson's own.

937. *White-listed.* Where the lightning had furrowed it.

940. *Cracks.* The use of the word for thunder is archaic. Cf. *The Tempest*, i. 2. 293:—

> "the fire and cracks
> Of sulphurous roaring the most mighty Neptune
> Seem to besiege," etc.

The verb is similarly used; as in *The Taming of the Shrew*, i. 2. 96: "As thunder when the clouds in autumn crack."

945. *Practice.* Plotting, trickery (archaic). Cf. *The Winter's Tale*, iii. 2. 168: "Unclasp'd my practice" (disclosed my plot), etc.

948. *Like an opal warm'd.* Alluding to a popular notion concerning the opal.

969. *Then crying, 'I have made his glory mine,'* etc. Littledale remarks here: "There are some remarkable coincidences of thought and expression between *Samson Agonistes* and this Idyll of *Merlin and Vivien*, dealing as they both do with the theme that (*Samson Agonistes*, 210)

> "'Wisest men
> Have erred, and been by bad women deceived,
> And shall again, pretend they ne'er so wise.'

Especially compare the last scene of all, where, like Samson, 'over-watched and wearied out,' Merlin, 'over-talked and over-worn,'

> "'Had yielded, told her all the charm, and slept.'

Samson reiterates the word 'Fool!' of himself (lines 201–204) as Vivien does of Merlin. In lines 392–407 he describes his traitress's victory: —

> "'Thrice she assayed, with flattering prayers and sighs,
> And amorous reproaches, to win from me
> My capital secret, in what part my strength
> Lay stored, in what part summ'd, that she might know;
> Thrice I deluded her, and turned to sport
> Her importunity, each time perceiving
> How openly and with what impudence
> She purposed to betray me, and (which was worse
> Than undissembled hate) with what contempt
> She sought to make me traitor to myself.
> Yet the fourth time, when, mustering all her wiles,
> With blandished parleys, feminine assaults,
> Tongue batteries, she surceased not day nor night
> To storm me, over-watched and wearied out,
> At times when men seek most their natural rest,
> I yielded, and unlocked her all my heart.'

"As we listen to the words we almost deem that it is not the Judge in Israel who speaks, but the spell-bound Mage within his prison-oak, deprived of use and name and fame for evermore."

ADDENDUM.

As the Preface states, I have attempted to correct the irregular and often inconsistent pointing, capitalization, etc., of the English editions.

A few of the errors and incongruities may be mentioned as specimens. In *Merlin and Vivien*, 124, the English editions read thus: "'She is too noble' he said 'to check at pies,'" and in many other places "he said" and the like are not separated by commas from what is said. The same is true of vocative nouns and phrases in many instances; as in *Gareth*

and Lynette, 694: "Thralls to your work again;" *Id.* 1273: "Ramp ye lance-splintering lions;" *Balin and Balan*, 543: "Or devil or man Guard thou thy head," etc. Sometimes we may be in doubt whether the noun is vocative or not (see note on *Blow trumpet*, p. 193, above). On the other hand, we find occasionally an over-punctuation in such cases; as in *Dora* (all editions): "Allan call'd his son, and said, 'My son: I married late,'" etc. The comma is sometimes omitted after *yea*, *nay*, *ay*, etc.; as in *The Coming of Arthur*: "yea and dark was Uther too;" *Gareth and Lynette*, 1242: "Ay well — ay well," etc. Parenthetical clauses are not always separated from the context by commas; and sometimes the same or similar phrases are pointed differently. Thus in *Geraint and Enid*, 344, we have: "Here, by God's grace, is the one voice for me;" and in 368, on the next page: "Here by God's rood is the one maid for me." So in *The Holy Grail*, 388, we find: —

"And I was left alone,
And thirsting, in a land of sand and thorns;"

And in 419: —

"And I was left alone
And wearying in a land of sand and thorns."

Restrictive relative clauses are often separated from the context by commas; as in these examples from *Gareth and Lynette*: "One, that had loved him from his childhood, caught" (53); "but this was all of that true steel, Whereof they forged," etc. (65); "Of those tall knights, that ranged about the throne" (321); "At one end one, that gave upon a range," etc. (651); "To call him shamed, who is but overthrown" (1228); "Peradventure he, you name" (1266); etc. Sometimes we find the right and the wrong pointing in the same sentence; as (1392): —

"And he that told the tale in older times
Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors,
But he, that told it later, says Lynette."

In the use of capitals, as Professor Jones remarks in *The Growth of the Idylls*, there is "no consistent use" in any edition. "We find in the same poem *queen* and *Queen*, *earl* and *Earl*, *prince* and *Prince*, *heaven* and *Heaven*, *king* and *King*;" and, I may add, in precisely similar uses and connections. There are sometimes inconsistencies in the very same line; as in *The Coming of Arthur*, 104: "And now the Barons and the kings prevail'd." In the same passage of *The Marriage of Geraint*, 619–623, we find "prince" and "Prince;" and a little further on (747–752) "Prince" and "princess." Similarly we find *sir* and *Sir*, *mother* and *Mother* (*Gareth and Lynette*, 111: "O Mother," etc.), *lord* and *Lord*; *Sun* and *sun*, *Moon* (rarely) and *moon*, *Earth* and *earth*; *Spring* and *spring*, *Summer* and *summer* (generally), *Autumn* and *autumn* (but *winter* always, I believe, though "Winter-tide" occurs in *The Last Tournament*, 221, but "wintertide" in *Ode to Memory*); *Sabbath* and *sabbath*; *north*, *south*, *east*, and *west* with and without capitals; *Eagle* and *eagle* (and *Eagle-owl*), and so on. In *Geraint and Enid*, 935, all the English editions have: "Men weed the white horse on the Berkshire hills;" in *Lancelot and Elaine*, 297: "When the strong neighings of the wild white Horse:" and in *Guinevere*, 15: "And tamper'd with the Lords of the

White Horse." Of course it should be "White Horse" in all three passages. In *Gareth and Lynette*, 1281, the reading is: "Arthur's harp tho' summer-wan;" and in *The Last Tournament:* "the harp of Arthur up in heaven."

Inconsistent forms sometimes occur in the same poem; as "Hear me, O Earth," and "Hear me, O earth," in *Œnone*. There we have also "O happy Heaven" and "O happy earth" in successive lines, and "O death" and "the starless road of Death," where, as in several other instances, the personified word is without the capital, while the unpersonified one has it.

In the *Idylls*, particularly in the more recent editions, Arthur and Guinevere are commonly "the King" and "the Queen" (as I have intended to make them uniformly), but occasionally (as in *The Coming of Arthur*, 307) we find "the king." In *Gareth and Lynette*, 244, we have "fairy Kings and Queens;" but, ten lines below, "Fairy King" and "Fairy Queens."

In the use of the hyphen there are very many inaccuracies. We find *brightblack*, *lovesong*, *blackshadow'd*, *seventimes-heated*, *hungerworn*, *goodmorrow*, etc.; and, on the other hand, *life-long* (*lifelong* also) *up-clomb* (but *upjetted*, *upswells*, etc), *field-of-battle*, etc.

There is much irregularity in the forms of past tenses, like *fixt* or *fix'd*. We find also (in the *Idylls* and elsewhere) *crost* and *cross'd*, *peakt* and *peak'd*, *past* and *pass'd*, *perplext* and *perplex'd*, *prest* and *press'd*, *graspt* and *grasp'd*, *dropt* and *dropp'd*, *drest* and *dress'd*, etc.

In many cases I can guess the reason why the poet used one form of pointing, capitalization, or spelling rather than the other; and then, even if I think the reason fanciful or insufficient, I make no change. I have my own reasons, which seem good to me, for all the changes I *have* made; but these reasons might not seem satisfactory to some of my readers. If they detect any errors, or what appear to be such, in my revision of the text, I shall be grateful for a memorandum of them.

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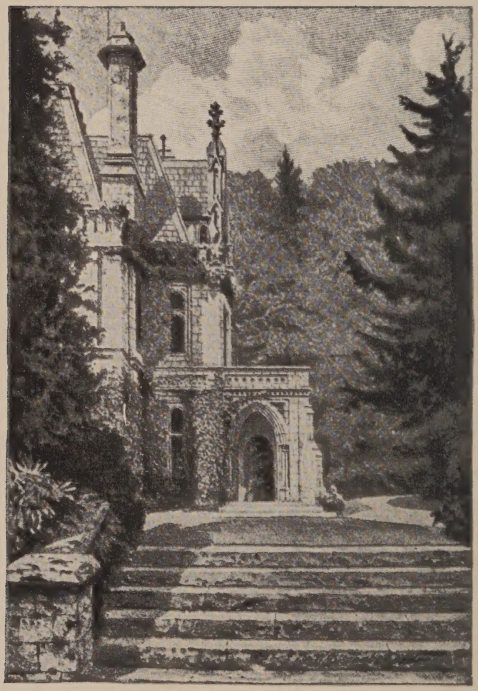

LORD TENNYSON'S HOME AT ALDWORTH

PART II

LANCELOT AND ELAINE

AND OTHER IDYLLS OF THE KING

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IDYLLS OF THE KING.

LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

ELAINE the fair, Elaine the lovable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,
High in her chamber up a tower to the east
Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot;
Which first she placed where morning's earliest ray
Might strike it, and awake her with the gleam;
Then fearing rust or soilure fashion'd for it
A case of silk, and braided thereupon
All the devices blazon'd on the shield
In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,
A border fantasy of branch and flower,
And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.
Nor rested thus content, but day by day,
Leaving her household and good father, climb'd
That eastern tower, and entering barr'd her door,
Stript off the case, and read the naked shield,
Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his arms,
Now made a pretty history to herself
Of every dint a sword had beaten in it,
And every scratch a lance had made upon it,
Conjecturing when and where: this cut is fresh;
That ten years back; this dealt him at Caerlyle;
That at Caerleon; this at Camelot:

And ah, God's mercy, what a stroke was there!
And here a thrust that might have kill'd, but God
Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his enemy down,
And saved him: so she lived in fantasy.

How came the lily maid by that good shield
Of Lancelot, she that knew not even his name?
He left it with her, when he rode to tilt
For the great diamond in the diamond jousts,
Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that name
Had named them, since a diamond was the prize.

For Arthur, long before they crown'd him king,
Roving the trackless realms of Lyonnesse,
Had found a glen, gray boulder and black tarn.
A horror lived about the tarn, and clave
Like its own mists to all the mountain side:
For here two brothers, one a king, had met
And fought together; but their names were lost;
And each had slain his brother at a blow;
And down they fell and made the glen abhorr'd:
And there they lay till all their bones were bleach'd,
And lichen'd into color with the crags:
And he that once was king had on a crown
Of diamonds, one in front and four aside.
And Arthur came, and laboring up the pass,
All in a misty moonshine, unawares
Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and the skull
Brake from the nape, and from the skull the crown
Roll'd into light, and turning on its rims
Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn:
And down the shingly scaur he plunged, and caught,
And set it on his head, and in his heart
Heard murmurs, 'Lo, thou likewise shalt be king.'

Thereafter, when a king, he had the gems
Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them to his knights
Saying: 'These jewels, whereupon I chanced
Divinely, are the kingdom's, not the King's —
For public use: henceforward let there be,
Once every year, a joust for one of these:
For so by nine years' proof we needs must learn
Which is our mightiest, and ourselves shall grow
In use of arms and manhood, till we drive
The heathen, who, some say, shall rule the land
Hereafter, which God hinder!' Thus he spoke:
And eight years past, eight jousts had been, and still
Had Lancelot won the diamond of the year,
With purpose to present them to the Queen
When all were won; but, meaning all at once
To snare her royal fancy with a boon
Worth half her realm, had never spoken word.

Now for the central diamond and the last
And largest, Arthur, holding then his court
Hard on the river nigh the place which now
Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust
At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh
Spake — for she had been sick — to Guinevere:
'Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot move
To these fair jousts?' 'Yea, lord,' she said, 'ye know it.'
'Then will ye miss,' he answer'd, 'the great deeds
Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,
A sight ye love to look on.' And the Queen
Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly
On Lancelot, where he stood beside the King.
He, thinking that he read her meaning there,
'Stay with me, I am sick; my love is more

Than many diamonds,' yielded ; and a heart
Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen —
However much he yearn'd to make complete
The tale of diamonds for his destined boon —
Urged him to speak against the truth, and say,
'Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly whole,
And lets me from the saddle ;' and the King
Glanced first at him, then her, and went his way.
No sooner gone than suddenly she began :

'To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot, much to blame!
Why go ye not to these fair jousts? the knights
Are half of them our enemies, and the crowd
Will murmur, "Lo the shameless ones, who take
Their pastime now the trustful King is gone!"'
Then Lancelot, vext at having lied in vain :
'Are ye so wise? ye were not once so wise,
My Queen, that summer when ye loved me first.
Then of the crowd ye took no more account
Than of the myriad cricket of the mead,
When its own voice clings to each blade of grass,
And every voice is nothing. As to knights,
Them surely can I silence with all ease.
But now my loyal worship is allow'd
Of all men : many a bard, without offence,
Has link'd our names together in his lay,
Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guinevere,
The pearl of beauty ; and our knights at feast
Have pledged us in this union, while the King
Would listen smiling. How then? is there more?
Has Arthur spoken aught? or would yourself,
Now weary of my service and devoir,
Henceforth be truer to your faultless lord?'

She broke into a little scornful laugh :
'Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless King,
That passionate perfection, my good lord —
But who can gaze upon the sun in heaven ?
He never spake word of reproach to me,
He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,
He cares not for me : only here to-day
There gleamed a vague suspicion in his eyes :
Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with him — else
Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,
And swearing men to vows impossible,
To make them like himself ; but, friend, to me
He is all fault who hath no fault at all :
For who loves me must have a touch of earth ;
The low sun makes the color : I am yours,
Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the bond.
And therefore hear my words : go to the jousts :
The tiny-trumpeting gnat can break our dream
When sweetest ; and the vermin voices here
May buzz so loud — we scorn them, but they sting.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights :
'And with what face, after my pretext made,
Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I
Before a king who honors his own word
As if it were his God's ? '

'Yea,' said the Queen,
'A moral child without the craft to rule,
Else had he not lost me : but listen to me,
If I must find you wit : we hear it said
That men go down before your spear at a touch,
But knowing you are Lancelot ; your great name,
This conquers : hide it therefore ; go unknown :

Win! by this kiss you will: and our true King
Will then allow your pretext, O my knight,
As all for glory; for to speak him true,
Ye know right well, how meek soe'er he seem,
No keener hunter after glory breathes.
He loves it in his knights more than himself;
They prove to him his work: win and return.'

Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,
Wroth at himself. Not willing to be known,
He left the barren-beaten thoroughfare,
Chose the green path that show'd the rarer foot,
And there among the solitary downs,
Full often lost in fancy, lost his way;
Till as he traced a faintly-shadow'd track,
That all in loops and links among the dales
Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw
Fired from the west, far on a hill, the towers.
Thither he made, and blew the gateway horn.
Then came an old, dumb, myriad-wrinkled man,
Who let him into lodging and disarm'd.
And Lancelot marvell'd at the wordless man;
And issuing found the Lord of Astolat
With two strong sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine,
Moving to meet him in the castle court;
And close behind them stept the lily maid
Elaine, his daughter: mother of the house
There was not. Some light jest among them rose
With laughter dying down as the great knight
Approach'd them; then the Lord of Astolat:
'Whence comest thou, my guest, and by what name
Livest between the lips? for by thy state
And presence I might guess thee chief of those,
After the King, who eat in Arthur's halls.

Him have I seen: the rest, his Table Round,
Known as they are, to me they are unknown.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights:
'Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and known,
What I by mere mischance have brought, my shield.
But since I go to joust as one unknown
At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not;
Hereafter ye shall know me — and the shield —
I pray you lend me one, if such you have,
Blank, or at least with some device not mine.'

Then said the Lord of Astolat: 'Here is Torre's:
Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre;
And so, God wot, his shield is blank enough.
His ye can have.' Then added plain Sir Torre,
'Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have it.'
Here laugh'd the father saying: 'Fie, Sir Churl,
Is that an answer for a noble knight?
Allow him! but Lavaine, my younger here,
He is so full of lustihood, he will ride,
Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an hour,
And set it in this damsel's golden hair,
To make her thrice as wilful as before.'

'Nay, father, nay, good father, shame me not
Before this noble knight,' said young Lavaine,
'For nothing. Surely I but play'd on Torre:
He seem'd so sullen, vext he could not go:
A jest, no more! for, knight, the maiden dreamt
That some one put this diamond in her hand,
And that it was too slippery to be held,
And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,
The castle-well, belike; and then I said

That *if* I went and *if* I fought and won it —
But all was jest and joke among ourselves —
Then must she keep it safelier. All was jest.
But, father, give me leave, an if he will,
To ride to Camelot with this noble knight:
Win shall I not, but do my best to win;
Young as I am, yet would I do my best.'

'So ye will grace me,' answer'd Lancelot,
Smiling a moment, 'with your fellowship
O'er these waste downs whereon I lost myself,
Then were I glad of you as guide and friend:
And you shall win this diamond, — as I hear,
It is a fair large diamond, — if ye may,
And yield it to this maiden, if ye will.'
'A fair large diamond,' added plain Sir Torre,
'Such be for queens, and not for simple maids.'
Then she, who held her eyes upon the ground,
Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,
Flush'd slightly at the slight disparagement
Before the stranger knight, who, looking at her,
Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus return'd:
'If what is fair be but for what is fair,
And only queens are to be counted so,
Rash were my judgment then, who deem this maid
Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,
Not violating the bond of like to like.'

He spoke and ceased: the lily maid Elaine,
Won by the mellow voice before she look'd,
Lifted her eyes and read his lineaments.
The great and guilty love he bare the Queen,
In battle with the love he bare his lord,
Had marr'd his face, and mark'd it ere his time.

Another sinning on such heights with one,
The flower of all the west and all the world,
Had been the sleeker for it ; but in him
His mood was often like a fiend, and rose
And drove him into wastes and solitudes
For agony, who was yet a living soul.
Marr'd as he was, he seem'd the goodliest man
That ever among ladies ate in hall,
And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes.
However marr'd, of more than twice her years,
Seam'd with an ancient sword-cut on the cheek,
And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up her eyes
And loved him, with that love which was her doom.

Then the great knight, the darling of the court,
Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall
Stept with all grace, and not with half disdain
Hid under grace, as in a smaller time,
But kindly man moving among his kind :
Whom they with meats and vintage of their best
And talk and minstrel melody entertain'd.
And much they ask'd of court and Table Round,
And ever well and readily answer'd he ;
But Lancelot, when they glanced at Guinevere,
Suddenly speaking of the wordless man,
Heard from the baron that, ten years before,
The heathen caught and reft him of his tongue.
' He learnt and warn'd me of their fierce design
Against my house, and him they caught and maim'd ;
But I, my sons, and little daughter fled
From bonds or death, and dwelt among the woods
By the great river in a boatman's hut.
Dull days were those, till our good Arthur broke
The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill.'

'O there, great lord, doubtless,' Lavaine said, rapt
By all the sweet and sudden passion of youth
Toward greatness in its elder, 'you have fought.
O, tell us — for we live apart — you know
Of Arthur's glorious wars.' And Lancelot spoke
And answer'd him at full, as having been
With Arthur in the fight which all day long
Rang by the white mouth of the violent Glem;
And in the four loud battles by the shore
Of Duglas; that on Bassa; then the war
That thunder'd in and out the gloomy skirts
Of Celidon the forest; and again
By Castle Gurnion, where the glorious King
Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head,
Carved of one emerald centred in a sun
Of silver rays, that lighten'd as he breathed;
And at Caerleon had he helped his lord,
When the strong neighings of the wild White Horse
Set every gilded parapet shuddering;
And up in Agned-Cathregonion too,
And down the waste sand-shores of Trath Treroit,
Where many a heathen fell; 'and on the mount
Of Badon I myself beheld the King
Charge at the head of all his Table Round,
And all his legions crying Christ and him,
And break them; and I saw him, after, stand
High on a heap of slain, from spur to plume
Red as the rising sun with heathen blood,
And seeing me, with a great voice he cried,
"They are broken, they are broken!" for the King,
However mild he seems at home, nor cares
For triumph in our mimic wars, the jousts —
For if his own knight casts him down, he laughs,
Saying his knights are better men than he —

Yet in this heathen war the fire of God
Fills him: I never saw his like; there lives
No greater leader.'

While he utter'd this,
Low to her own heart said the lily maid,
'Save your great self, fair lord;' and when he fell
From talk of war to traits of pleasantry —
Being mirthful he, but in a stately kind —
She still took note that when the living smile
Died from his lips, across him came a cloud
Of melancholy severe, from which again,
Whenever in her hovering to and fro
The lily maid had striven to make him cheer,
There brake a sudden-beaming tenderness
Of manners and of nature: and she thought
That all was nature, all, perchance, for her.
And all night long his face before her lived,
As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
The shape and color of a mind and life,
Lives for his children, ever at its best
And fullest; so the face before her lived,
Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence, full
Of noble things, and held her from her sleep,
Till rathe she rose, half-cheated in the thought
She needs must bid farewell to sweet Lavaine.
First as in fear, step after step, she stole
Down the long tower-stairs, hesitating:
Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the court,
'This shield, my friend, where is it?' and Lavaine
Past inward, as she came from out the tower.
There to his proud horse Lancelot turn'd, and smooth'd

The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.
Half-envious of the flattering hand, she drew
Nearer and stood. He look'd, and, more amazed
Than if seven men had set upon him, saw
The maiden standing in the dewy light.
He had not dream'd she was so beautiful.
Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,
For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood
Kapt on his face as if it were a god's.
Suddenly flash'd on her a wild desire
That he should wear her favor at the tilt.
She braved a riotous heart in asking for it.
'Fair lord, whose name I know not — noble it is,
I well believe, the noblest — will you wear
My favor at this tourney?' 'Nay,' said he,
'Fair lady, since I never yet have worn
Favor of any lady in the lists.
Such is my wont, as those who know me know.'
'Yea, so,' she answer'd; 'then in wearing mine
Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble lord,
That those who know should know you.' And he turn'd
Her counsel up and down within his mind,
And found it true, and answer'd: 'True, my child.
Well, I will wear it: fetch it out to me:
What is it?' and she told him, 'A red sleeve
Broider'd with pearls,' and brought it: then he bound
Her token on his helmet, with a smile
Saying, 'I never yet have done so much
For any maiden living,' and the blood
Sprang to her face and fill'd her with delight;
But left her all the paler when Lavaine
Returning brought the yet-unblazon'd shield,
His brother's; which he gave to Lancelot,
Who parted with his own to fair Elaine:

'Do me this grace, my child, to have my shield
In keeping till I come.' 'A grace to me,'
She answer'd, 'twice to-day. I am your squire!'
Whereat Lavaine said laughing: 'Lily maid,
For fear our people call you lily maid
In earnest, let me bring your color back;
Once, twice, and thrice: now get you hence to bed:'
So kiss'd her, and Sir Lancelot his own hand,
And thus they moved away: she staid a minute,
Then made a sudden step to the gate, and there —
Her bright hair blown about the serious face
Yet rosy-kindled with her brother's kiss —
Paused by the gateway, standing near the shield
In silence, while she watch'd their arms far-off
Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.
Then to her tower she climb'd, and took the shield,
There kept it, and so lived in fantasy.

Meanwhile the new companions past away
Far o'er the long backs of the bushless downs,
To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived a knight
Not far from Camelot, now for forty years
A hermit, who had pray'd, labor'd and pray'd,
And ever laboring had scoop'd himself
In the white rock a chapel and a hall
On massive columns, like a shore-cliff cave,
And cells and chambers: all were fair and dry;
The green light from the meadows underneath
Struck up and lived along the milky roofs;
And in the meadows tremulous aspen-trees
And poplars made a noise of falling showers.
And thither wending there that night they bode.

But when the next day broke from underground,
And shot red fire and shadows thro' the cave,

They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and rode away.
Then Lancelot saying, 'Hear, but hold my name
Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the Lake,'
Abash'd Lavaine, whose instant reverence,
Dearer to true young hearts than their own praise,
But left him leave to stammer, 'Is it indeed?'
And after muttering, 'The great Lancelot,'
At last he got his breath and answer'd: 'One,
One have I seen — that other, our liege lord,
The dread Pendragon, Britain's King of kings,
Of whom the people talk mysteriously,
He will be there — then were I stricken blind
That minute, I might say that I had seen.'

So spake Lavaine, and when they reach'd the lists
By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes
Run thro' the peopled gallery which half round
Lay like a rainbow fallen upon the grass,
Until they found the clear-faced King, who sat
Robed in red samite, easily to be known,
Since to his crown the golden dragon clung,
And down his robe the dragon writhed in gold,
And from the carven-work behind him crept
Two dragons gilded, sloping down to make
Arms for his chair, while all the rest of them
Thro' knots and loops and folds innumerable
Fled ever thro' the woodwork, till they found
The new design wherein they lost themselves,
Yet with all ease, so tender was the work:
And, in the costly canopy o'er him set,
Blazed the last diamond of the nameless king.

Then Lancelot answer'd young Lavaine and said:
Me you call great: mine is the firmer seat,

The truer lance: but there is many a youth
Now crescent, who will come to all I am
And overcome it; and in me there dwells
No greatness, save it be some far-off touch
Of greatness to know well I am not great:
There is the man.' And Lavaine gaped upon him
As on a thing miraculous, and anon
The trumpets blew; and then did either side,
They that assail'd, and they that held the lists,
Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly move,
Meet in the midst, and there so furiously
Shock that a man far-off might well perceive,
If any man that day were left afield,
The hard earth shake, and a low thunder of arms.
And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw
Which were the weaker; then he hurl'd into it
Against the stronger: little need to speak
Of Lancelot in his glory! King, duke, earl,
Count, baron — whom he smote, he overthrew.

But in the field were Lancelot's kith and kin,
Ranged with the Table Round that held the lists,
Strong men, and wrathful that a stranger knight
Should do and almost overdo the deeds
Of Lancelot; and one said to the other, 'Lo!
What is he? I do not mean the force alone —
The grace and versatility of the man!
Is it not Lancelot?' 'When has Lancelot worn
Favor of any lady in the lists?
Not such his wont, as we that know him know.'
'How then? who then?' a fury seized them all,
A fiery family passion for the name
Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs.
They couch'd their spears and prick'd their steeds, and thus

Their plumes driven backward by the wind they made
In moving, all together down upon him
Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North Sea,
Green-glimmering toward the summit, bears, with all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark
And him that helms it; so they overbore
Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear
Down-glancing lamed the charger, and a spear
Prick'd sharply his own cuirass, and the head
Pierced thro' his side, and there snapt and remain'd.

Then Sir Lavaine did well and worshipfully:
He bore a knight of old repute to the earth,
And brought his horse to Lancelot where he lay.
He up the side, sweating with agony, got,
But thought to do while he might yet endure,
And being lustily holpen by the rest,
His party, — tho' it seem'd half-miracle
To those he fought with, — drave his kith and kin,
And all the Table Round that held the lists,
Back to the barrier; then the trumpets blew
Proclaiming his the prize who wore the sleeve
Of scarlet and the pearls; and all the knights,
His party, cried, 'Advance and take thy prize
The diamond;' but he answer'd: 'Diamond me
No diamonds! for God's love, a little air!
Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death!
Hence will I, and I charge you, follow me not.'

He spoke, and vanish'd suddenly from the field
With young Lavaine into the poplar grove.
There from his charger down he slid, and sat,
Gasping to Sir Lavaine, 'Draw the lance-head.'

'Ah, my sweet lord Sir Lancelot,' said Lavaine,
'I dread me, if I draw it, you will die.'
But he, 'I die already with it: draw —
Draw,' — and Lavaine drew, and Sir Lancelot gave
A marvellous great shriek and ghastly groan,
And half his blood burst forth, and down he sank
For the pure pain, and wholly swoon'd away.
Then came the hermit out and bare him in,
There stanch'd his wound; and there, in daily doubt
Whether to live or die, for many a week
Hid from the wild world's rumor by the grove
Of poplars with their noise of falling showers,
And ever-tremulous aspen-trees, he lay.

But on that day when Lancelot fled the lists,
His party, knights of utmost North and West,
Lords of waste marshes, kings of desolate isles,
Came round their great Pendragon, saying to him,
'Lo, Sire, our knight, thro' whom we won the day,
Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left his prize
Untaken, crying that his prize is death.'
'Heaven hinder,' said the King, 'that such an one,
So great a knight as we have seen to-day —
He seem'd to me another Lancelot —
Yea, twenty times I thought him Lancelot —
He must not pass uncared for. Wherefore rise,
O Gawain, and ride forth and find the knight.
Wounded and wearied, needs must he be near.
I charge you that you get at once to horse.
And, knights and kings, there breathes not one of you
Will deem this prize of ours is rashly given:
His prowess was too wondrous. We will do him
No customary honor: since the knight
Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,

Ourselves will send it after. Rise and take
This diamond, and deliver it, and return,
And bring us where he is, and how he fares,
And cease not from your quest until ye find.'

So saying, from the carven flower above,
To which it made a restless heart, he took
And gave the diamond: then from where he sat
At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose, 55
With smiling face and frowning heart, a prince
In the mid might and flourish of his May,
Gawain, surnamed the Courteous, fair and strong,
And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint,
And Gareth, a good knight, but therewithal
Sir Modred's brother, and the child of Lot,
Nor often loyal to his word, and now
Wroth that the King's command to sally forth
In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave
The banquet and concourse of knights and kings. 60

So all in wrath he got to horse and went;
While Arthur to the banquet, dark in mood,
Past, thinking, 'Is it Lancelot who hath come
Despite the wound he spake of, all for gain
Of glory, and hath added wound to wound,
And ridden away to die?' So fear'd the King,
And, after two days' tarriance there, return'd.
Then when he saw the Queen, embracing ask'd,
'Love, are you yet so sick?' 'Nay, lord,' she said.
'And where is Lancelot?' Then the Queen amazed, 570
'Was he not with you? won he not your prize?'
'Nay, but one like him.' 'Why, that like was he.'
And when the King demanded how she knew,
Said: 'Lord, no sooner had ye parted from us

Than Lancelot told me of a common talk
That men went down before his spear at a touch,
But knowing he was Lancelot; his great name
Conquer'd; and therefore would he hide his name
From all men, even the King, and to this end
Had made the pretext of a hindering wound,
That he might joust unknown of all, and learn
If his old prowess were in aught decay'd;
And added, "Our true Arthur, when he learns,
Will well allow my pretext, as for gain
Of purer glory."'

Then replied the King:
'Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,
In lieu of idly dallying with the truth,
To have trusted me as he hath trusted thee.
Surely his King and most familiar friend
Might well have kept his secret. True, indeed,
Albeit I know my knights fantastical,
So fine a fear in our large Lancelot
Must needs have moved my laughter: now remains
But little cause for laughter: his own kin —
Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him, this! —
His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon him;
So that he went sore wounded from the field.
Yet good news too; for goodly hopes are mine
That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart.
He wore, against his wont, upon his helm
A sleeve of scarlet, broider'd with great pearls,
Some gentle maiden's gift.'

'Yea, lord,' she said,
'Thy hopes are mine,' and saying that, she choked,
And sharply turn'd about to hide her face,

Past to her chamber, and there flung herself
Down on the great King's couch, and writhed upon it,
And clench'd her fingers till they bit the palm,
And shriek'd out 'Traitor!' to the unhearing wall,
Then flash'd into wild tears, and rose again,
And moved about her palace, proud and pale.

Gawain the while thro' all the region round
Rode with his diamond, wearied of the quest,
Touch'd at all points except the poplar grove,
And came at last, tho' late, to Astolat;
Whom glittering in enamell'd arms the maid
Glanced at, and cried, 'What news from Camelot, lord?
What of the knight with the red sleeve?' 'He won.'
'I knew it,' she said. 'But parted from the jousts
Hurt in the side;' whereat she caught her breath;
Thro' her own side she felt the sharp lance go;
Thereon she smote her hand; wellnigh she swoon'd:
And, while he gazed wonderingly at her, came
The Lord of Astolat out, to whom the prince
Reported who he was, and on what quest
Sent, that he bore the prize and could not find
The victor, but had ridden a random round
To seek him, and had wearied of the search.
To whom the Lord of Astolat: 'Bide with us,
And ride no more at random, noble prince!
Here was the knight, and here he left a shield;
This will he send or come for: furthermore
Our son is with him; we shall hear anon,
Needs must we hear.' To this the courteous prince
Accorded with his wonted courtesy,
Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it,
And staid; and cast his eyes on fair Elaine;
Where could be found face daintier? then her shape

From forehead down to foot, perfect — again
From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd :
'Well — if I bide, lo ! this wild flower for me !' 64a
And oft they met among the garden yews,
And there he set himself to play upon her
With sallying wit, free flashes from a height
Above her, graces of the court, and songs,
Sighs, and low smiles, and golden eloquence
And amorous adulation, till the maid
Rebell'd against it, saying to him: 'Prince,
O loyal nephew of our noble King,
Why ask you not to see the shield he left,
Whence you might learn his name? Why slight your
King, 65a
And lose the quest he sent you on, and prove
No surer than our falcon yesterday,
Who lost the hern we slipt her at, and went
To all the winds?' 'Nay, by mine head,' said he,
'I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,
O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes ;
But an ye will it let me see the shield.'
And when the shield was brought, and Gawain saw
Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with gold,
Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh, and mock'd : 66c
'Right was the King ! our Lancelot ! that true man !'
'And right was I,' she answer'd merrily, 'I,
Who dream'd my knight the greatest knight of all.'
'And if *I* dream'd,' said Gawain, 'that you love
This greatest knight, your pardon ! lo, ye know it !
Speak therefore : shall I waste myself in vain ?'
Full simple was her answer : 'What know I ?
My brethren have been all my fellowship ;
And I, when often they have talk'd of love,

Wish'd it had been my mother, for they talk'd,
Meseem'd, of what they knew not; so myself —
I know not if I know what true love is,
But if I know, then, if I love not him,
I know there is none other I can love.'
'Yea, by God's death,' said he, 'ye love him well,
But would not, knew ye what all others know,
And whom he loves.' 'So be it,' cried Elaine,
And lifted her fair face and moved away:
But he pursued her, calling, 'Stay a little!
One golden minute's grace! he wore your sleeve:
Would he break faith with one I may not name?
Must our true man change like a leaf at last?
Nay — like enow: why then, far be it from me
To cross our mighty Lancelot in his loves!
And, damsel, for I deem you know full well
Where your great knight is hidden, let me leave
My quest with you; the diamond also: here!
For if you love, it will be sweet to give it;
And if he love, it will be sweet to have it
From your own hand; and whether he love or not,
A diamond is a diamond. Fare you well
A thousand times! — a thousand times farewell!
Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we two
May meet at court hereafter: there, I think,
So ye will learn the courtesies of the court,
We two shall know each other.'

Then he gave,
And slightly kiss'd the hand to which he gave,
The diamond, and all wearied of the quest
Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he went
A true-love ballad, lightly rode away.

Thence to the court he past ; there told the King
What the King knew, 'Sir Lancelot is the knight.'
And added, 'Sire, my liege, so much I learnt ;
But fail'd to find him, tho' I rode all round
The region : but I lighted on the maid
Whose sleeve he wore ; she loves him ; and to her,
Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,
I gave the diamond : she will render it ;
For by mine head she knows his hiding-place.'

The seldom-frowning King frown'd, and replied,
'Too courteous truly ! ye shall go no more
On quest of mine, seeing that ye forget
Obedience is the courtesy due to kings.'

He spake and parted. Wroth, but all in awe,
For twenty strokes of the blood, without a word,
Linger'd that other, staring after him ;
Then shook his hair, strode off, and buzz'd abroad
About the maid of Astolat, and her love.
All ears were prick'd at once, all tongues were loosed :
'The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lancelot,
Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat.'
Some read the King's face, some the Queen's, and all
Had marvel what the maid might be, but most
Predoom'd her as unworthy. One old dame
Came suddenly on the Queen with the sharp news.
She, that had heard the noise of it before,
But sorrowing Lancelot should have stoop'd so low,
Marr'd her friend's aim with pale tranquillity.
So ran the tale like fire about the court,
Fire in dry stubble a nine-days' wonder flared :
Till even the knights at banquet twice or thrice
Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the Queen,

And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid
Smiled at each other, while the Queen, who sat
With lips severely placid, felt the knot
Climb in her throat, and with her feet unseen
Crush'd the wild passion out against the floor
Beneath the banquet, where the meats became
As wormwood and she hated all who pledged.

But far away the maid in Astolat,
Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept
The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,
Crept to her father, while he mused alone,
Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face and said:
'Father, you call me wilful, and the fault
Is yours who let me have my will, and now,
Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits?'
'Nay,' said he, 'surely.' 'Wherefore, let me hence,'
She answer'd, 'and find out our dear Lavaine.'
'Ye will not lose your wits for dear Lavaine:
Bide,' answer'd he: 'we needs must hear anon
Of him, and of that other.' 'Ay,' she said,
'And of that other, for I needs must hence
And find that other, whereso'er he be,
And with mine own hand give his diamond to him,
Lest I be found as faithless in the quest
As yon proud prince who left the quest to me.
Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Death-pale, for the lack of gentle maiden's aid.
The gentler-born the maiden, the more bound,
My father, to be sweet and serviceable
To noble knights in sickness, as ye know,
When these have worn their tokens: let me hence,
I pray you.' Then her father nodding said:

'Ay, ay, the diamond: wit ye well, my child,
Right fain were I to learn this knight were whole,
Being our greatest: yea, and you must give it —
And sure I think this fruit is hung too high
For any mouth to gape for save a queen's —
Nay, I mean nothing: so then, get you gone,
Being so very wilful you must go.'

Lightly, her suit allow'd, she slipt away,
And while she made her ready for her ride
Her father's latest word humm'd in her ear,
'Being so very wilful you must go,'
And changed itself and echo'd in her heart,
'Being so very wilful you must die.'
But she was happy enough and shook it off,
As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us;
And in her heart she answer'd it and said,
'What matter, so I help him back to life?'
Then far away with good Sir Torre for guide
Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless downs
To Camelot, and before the city-gates
Came on her brother with a happy face
Making a roan horse caper and curvet
For pleasure all about a field of flowers;
Whom when she saw, 'Lavaine,' she cried, 'Lavaine,
How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?' He amazed,
'Torre and Elaine! why here? Sir Lancelot!
How know ye my lord's name is Lancelot?'
But when the maid had told him all her tale,
Then turn'd Sir Torre, and being in his moods
Left them, and under the strange-statued gate,
Where Arthur's wars were render'd mystically,
Past up the still rich city to his kin,
His own far blood, which dwelt at Camelot;

And her, Lavaine across the poplar grove
Led to the caves: there first she saw the casque
Of Lancelot on the wall: her scarlet sleeve,
Tho' carved and cut, and half the pearls away,
Stream'd from it still; and in her heart she laugh'd,
Because he had not loosed it from his helm,
But meant once more perchance to tourney in it.
And when they gain'd the cell wherein he slept,
His battle-writhen arms and mighty hands
Lay naked on the wolf-skin, and a dream
Of dragging down his enemy made them move.
Then she that saw him lying unsleek, unshorn,
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Utter'd a little tender dolorous cry.
The sound not wonted in a place so still
Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd his eyes
Yet blank from sleep, she started to him, saying,
'Your prize the diamond sent you by the King.'
His eyes glisten'd: she fancied, 'Is it for me?'
And when the maid had told him all the tale
Of king and prince, the diamond sent, the quest
Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt
Full lowly by the corners of his bed,
And laid the diamond in his open hand.
Her face was near, and as we kiss the child
That does the task assign'd, he kiss'd her face.
At once she slipt like water to the floor.
'Alas,' he said, 'your ride hath wearied you.
Rest must you have.' 'No rest for me,' she said;
'Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest.'
What might she mean by that? his large black eyes,
Yet larger thro' his leanness, dwelt upon her,
Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself
In the heart's colors on her simple face;

And Lancelot look'd and was perplext in mind,
And being weak in body said no more,
But did not love the color ; woman's love,
Save one, he not regarded, and so turn'd
Sighing, and feign'd a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the fields,
And past beneath the weirdly-sculptured gates
Far up the dim rich city to her kin ;
There bode the night : but woke with dawn, and past
Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields,
Thence to the cave. So day by day she past
In either twilight ghost-like to and fro
Gliding, and every day she tended him,
And likewise many a night ; and Lancelot
Would, tho' he call'd his wound a little hurt
Whereof he should be quickly whole, at times
Brain-feverous in his heat and agony, seem
Uncourteous, even he : but the meek maid
Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him
Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,
Milder than any mother to a sick child,
And never woman yet, since man's first fall,
Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love
Upbore her ; till the hermit, skill'd in all
The simples and the science of that time,
Told him that her fine care had saved his life.
And the sick man forgot her simple blush,
Would call her friend and sister, sweet Elaine,
Would listen for her coming and regret
Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
And loved her with all love except the love
Of man and woman when they love their best,
Closest and sweetest, and had died the death

In any knightly fashion for her sake.
And peradventure had he seen her first
She might have made this and that other world
Another world for the sick man; but now
The shackles of an old love straiten'd him,
His honor rooted in dishonor stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Yet the great knight in his mid-sickness made
Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.
These, as but born of sickness, could not live;
For when the blood ran lustier in him again,
Full often the bright image of one face,
Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,
Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.
Then if the maiden, while that ghostly grace
Beam'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd not,
Or short and coldly, and she knew right well
What the rough sickness meant, but what this meant
She knew not, and the sorrow dimm'd her sight,
And drave her ere her time across the fields
Far into the rich city, where alone
She murmur'd, 'Vain, in vain: it cannot be.
He will not love me: how then? must I die?'
Then as a little helpless innocent bird,
That has but one plain passage of few notes,
Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
For all an April morning, till the ear
Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid
Went half the night repeating, 'Must I die?'
And now to right she turn'd, and now to left,
And found no ease in turning or in rest;
And 'Him or death,' she mutter'd, 'death or him,'
Again and like a burthen, 'Him or death.'

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt was whole,
To Astolat returning rode the three.
There morn by morn, arraying her sweet self
In that wherein she deem'd she look'd her best,
She came before Sir Lancelot, for she thought,
'If I be loved, these are my festal robes,
If not, the victim's flowers before he fall.'
And Lancelot ever prest upon the maid
That she should ask some goodly gift of him
For her own self or hers: 'and do not shun
To speak the wish most near to your true heart;
Such service have ye done me that I make
My will of yours, and prince and lord am I
In mine own land, and what I will I can.'
Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,
But like a ghost without the power to speak.
And Lancelot saw that she withheld her wish,
And bode among them yet a little space
Till he should learn it; and one morn it chanced
He found her in among the garden yews,
And said, 'Delay no longer, speak your wish,
Seeing I go to-day:' then out she brake:
'Going? and we shall never see you more.
And I must die for want of one bold word.'
'Speak: that I live to hear,' he said, 'is yours.'
Then suddenly and passionately she spoke:
'I have gone mad. I love you: let me die.'
'Ah, sister,' answer'd Lancelot, 'what is this?'
And innocently extending her white arms,
'Your love,' she said, 'your love — to be your wife.'
And Lancelot answer'd, 'Had I chosen to wed,
I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine;
But now there never will be wife of mine.'
'No, no,' she cried, 'I care not to be wife,

But to be with you still, to see your face,
To serve you, and to follow you thro' the world.'
And Lancelot answer'd: 'Nay, the world, the world,
All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue
To blare its own interpretation — nay,
Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,
And your good father's kindness.' And she said,
'Not to be with you, not to see your face —
Alas for me then, my good days are done!'
'Nay, noble maid,' he answer'd, 'ten times nay!
This is not love, but love's first flash in youth,
Most common: yea, I know it of mine own self;
And you yourself will smile at your own self
Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life
To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age.
And then will I, for true you are and sweet
Beyond mine old belief in womanhood,
More specially should your good knight be poor,
Endow you with broad land and territory
Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,
So that would make you happy: furthermore,
Even to the death, as tho' ye were my blood,
In all your quarrels will I be your knight.
This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,
And more than this I cannot.'

While he spoke
She neither blush'd nor shook, but deathly-pale
Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied,
'Of all this will I nothing;' and so fell,
And thus they bore her swooning to her tower.

Then spake, to whom thro' those black walls of yew
Their talk had pierced, her father: 'Ay, a flash,

I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead.
Too courteous are ye, fair Lord Lancelot.
I pray you, use some rough discourtesy
To blunt or break her passion.'

Lancelot said,
'That were against me: what I can I will;'
And there that day remain'd, and toward even
Sent for his shield: full meekly rose the maid,
Stript off the case, and gave the naked shield;
Then, when she heard his horse upon the stones,
Unclasping flung the casement back, and look'd
Down on his helm, from which her sleeve had gone.
And Lancelot knew the little clinking sound;
And she by tact of love was well aware
That Lancelot knew that she was looking at him.
And yet he glanced not up, nor waved his hand,
Nor bade farewell, but sadly rode away.
This was the one discourtesy that he used.

So in her tower alone the maiden sat:
His very shield was gone; only the case,
Her own poor work, her empty labor, left.
But still she heard him, still his picture form'd
And grew between her and the pictured wall.
Then came her father, saying in low tones,
'Have comfort,' whom she greeted quietly.
Then came her brethren saying, 'Peace to thee,
Sweet sister,' whom she answer'd with all calm.
But when they left her to herself again,
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant field
Approaching thro' the darkness, call'd; the owls
Wailing had power upon her, and she mixt
Her fancies with the sallow-rifted glooms
Of evening and the moanings of the wind.

And in those days she made a little song,
And call'd her song 'The Song of Love and Death,'
And sang it: sweetly could she make and sing.

'Sweet is true love tho' given in vain, in vain;
And sweet is death who puts an end to pain:
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must be:
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

'Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away;
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless clay:
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'I fain would follow love, if that could be;
I needs must follow death, who calls for me;
Call and I follow, I follow! let me die.'

High with the last line scaled her voice, and this,
All in a fiery dawning wild with wind
That shook her tower, the brothers heard, and thought
With shuddering, 'Hark the Phantom of the house
That ever shrieks before a death,' and call'd
The father, and all three in hurry and fear
Ran to her, and lo! the blood-red light of dawn
Flared on her face, she shrilling, 'Let me die!'

As when we dwell upon a word we know,
Repeating, till the word we know so well
Becomes a wonder, and we know not why,
So dwelt the father on her face, and thought,
'Is this Elaine?' till back the maiden fell,

Then gave a languid hand to each, and lay,
Speaking a still good-morrow with her eyes.
At last she said: 'Sweet brothers, yesternight
I seem'd a curious little maid again,
As happy as when we dwelt among the woods,
And when ye used to take me with the flood
Up the great river in the boatman's boat.
Only ye would not pass beyond the cape
That has the poplar on it: there ye fixt
Your limit, oft returning with the tide.
And yet I cried because ye would not pass
Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
Until we found the palace of the King.
And yet ye would not; but this night I dream'd
That I was all alone upon the flood,
And then I said, "Now shall I have my will:"
And there I woke, but still the wish remain'd.
So let me hence that I may pass at last
Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,
Until I find the palace of the King.
There will I enter in among them all,
And no man there will dare to mock at me;
But there the fine Gawain will wonder at me,
And there the great Sir Lancelot muse at me;
Gawain, who bade a thousand farewells to me,
Lancelot, who coldly went, nor bade me one:
And there the King will know me and my love,
And there the Queen herself will pity me,
And all the gentle court will welcome me,
And after my long voyage I shall rest!'

'Peace,' said her father, 'O my child, ye seem
Light-headed, for what force is yours to go

So far, being sick? and wherefore would ye look
On this proud fellow again, who scorns us all?'

Then the rough Torre began to heave and move,
And bluster into stormy sobs and say:
'I never loved him: an I meet with him,
I care not howsoever great he be,
Then will I strike at him and strike him down;
Give me good fortune, I will strike him dead,
For this discomfort he hath done the house.'

To whom the gentle sister made reply:
'Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be wroth,
Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault
Not to love me than it is mine to love
Him of all men who seems to me the highest.'

'Highest?' the father answer'd, echoing 'highest?'—
He meant to break the passion in her—'nay,
Daughter, I know not what you call the highest;
But this I know, for all the people know it,
He loves the Queen, and in an open shame:
And she returns his love in open shame;
If this be high, what is it to be low?'

Then spake the lily maid of Astolat:
'Sweet father, all too faint and sick am I
For anger: these are slanders; never yet
Was noble man but made ignoble talk.
He makes no friend who never made a foe.
But now it is my glory to have loved
One peerless, without stain: so let me pass,
My father, howsoe'er I seem to you,
Not all unhappy, having loved God's best

And greatest, tho' my love had no return :
Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,
Thanks, but you work against your own desire ;
For if I could believe the things you say
I should but die the sooner ; wherefore cease,
Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man
Hither, and let me shrive me clean and die.'

So when the ghostly man had come and gone,
She, with a face bright as for sin forgiven,
Besought Lavaine to write as she devised
A letter, word for word ; and when he ask'd,
'Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord ?
Then will I bear it gladly ;' she replied,
'For Lancelot and the Queen and all the world,
But I myself must bear it.' Then he wrote
The letter she devised ; which being writ
And folded, 'O sweet father, tender and true,
Deny me not,' she said — 'ye never yet
Denied my fancies — this, however strange,
My latest : lay the letter in my hand
A little ere I die, and close the hand
Upon it ; I shall guard it even in death.
And when the heat has gone from out my heart,
Then take the little bed on which I died
For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the Queen's
For richness, and me also like the Queen
In all I have of rich, and lay me on it.
And let there be prepared a chariot-bier
To take me to the river, and a barge
Be ready on the river, clothed in black.
I go in state to court, to meet the Queen.
There surely I shall speak for mine own self,
And none of you can speak for me so well.

And therefore let our dumb old man alone
Go with me; he can steer and row, and he
Will guide me to that palace, to the doors.'

She ceased: her father promised; whereupon
She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her death
Was rather in the fantasy than the blood.
But ten slow mornings past, and on the eleventh
Her father laid the letter in her hand,
And closed the hand upon it, and she died.
So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from underground,
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows
Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
Past like a shadow thro' the field, that shone
Full-summer, to that stream whereon the barge,
Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.
There sat the lifelong creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.
So those two brethren from the chariot took
And on the black decks laid her in her bed,
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings,
And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to her,
'Sister, farewell forever,' and again,
'Farewell, sweet sister,' parted all in tears.
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,
Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood —
In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter — all her bright hair streaming down —
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white

All but her face, and that clear-featured face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace craved
Audience of Guinevere, to give at last
The price of half a realm, his costly gift,
Hard-won and hardly won with bruise and blow,
With deaths of others, and almost his own,
The nine-years-fought-for diamonds; for he saw
One of her house, and sent him to the Queen
Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen agreed
With such and so unmoved a majesty
She might have seem'd her statue, but that he,
Low-drooping till he wellnigh kiss'd her feet
For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye
The shadow of some piece of pointed lace,
In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the walls,
And parted, laughing in his courtly heart.

All in an oriel on the summer side,
Vine-clad, of Arthur's palace toward the stream,
They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd: 'Queen,
Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,
Take, what I had not won except for you,
These jewels, and make me happy, making them
An armlet for the roundest arm on earth,
Or necklace for a neck to which the swan's
Is tawnier than her cygnet's: these are words;
Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin
In speaking, yet O, grant my worship of it
Words, as we grant grief tears. Such sin in words
Perchance, we both can pardon; but, my Queen,
I hear of rumors flying thro' your court.

Our bond, as not the bond of man and wife,
Should have in it an absoluter trust
To make up that defect: let rumors be:
When did not rumors fly? these, as I trust
That you trust me in your own nobleness,
I may not well believe that you believe.'

While thus he spoke, half turn'd away, the Queen
Brake from the vast oriel-embowering vine
Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them off,
Till all the place whereon she stood was green;
Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive hand
Received at once and laid aside the gems
There on a table near her, and replied:

'It may be I am quicker of belief
Than you believe me, Lancelot of the Lake.
Our bond is not the bond of man and wife.
This good is in it, whatsoe'er of ill,
It can be broken easier. I for you
This many a year have done despite and wrong
To one whom ever in my heart of hearts
I did acknowledge nobler. What are these?
Diamonds for me! they had been thrice their worth
Being your gift, had you not lost your own.
To loyal hearts the value of all gifts
Must vary as the giver's. Not for me!
For her! for your new fancy. Only this
Grant me, I pray you: have your joys apart.
I doubt not that, however changed, you keep
So much of what is graceful: and myself
Would shun to break those bounds of courtesy
In which as Arthur's Queen I move and rule;
So cannot speak my mind. An end to this!

A strange one! yet I take it with Amen.
So pray you, add my diamonds to her pearls;
Deck her with these; tell her, she shines me down:
An armlet for an arm to which the Queen's
Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck
O, as much fairer — as a faith once fair
Was richer than these diamonds — hers not mine —
Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself,
Or hers or mine, mine now to work my will —
She shall not have them.'

Saying which she seized,
And, thro' the casement standing wide for heat,
Flung them, and down they flash'd, and smote the stream.
Then from the smitten surface flash'd, as it were,
Diamonds to meet them, and they past away.
Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half disdain
At love, life, all things, on the window ledge,
Close underneath his eyes, and right across
Where these had fallen, slowly past the barge
Whereon the lily maid of Astolat
Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night.

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst away
To weep and wail in secret; and the barge,
On to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.
There two stood arm'd, and kept the door; to whom,
All up the marble stair, tier over tier,
Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes that ask'd,
'What is it?' but that oarsman's haggard face,
As hard and still as is the face that men
Shape to their fancy's eye from broken rocks
On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and they said:
'He is enchanted, cannot speak — and she,

Look how she sleeps—the Fairy Queen, so fair!
Yea, but how pale! what are they? flesh and blood?
Or come to take the King to Fairyland?
For some do hold our Arthur cannot die,
But that he passes into Fairyland.'

While thus they babbled of the King, the King
Came girt with knights: then turn'd the tongueless maid
From the half-face to the full eye, and rose
And pointed to the damsel and the doors.
So Arthur bade the meek Sir Percivale
And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid;
And reverently they bore her into hall.
Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd at her,
And Lancelot later came and mused at her,
And last the Queen herself, and pitied her;
But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,
Stoopt, took, brake seal, and read it; this was all:

'Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake,
I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat,
Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
Hither, to take my last farewell of you.
I loved you, and my love had no return,
And therefore my true love has been my death.
And therefore to our Lady Guinevere,
And to all other ladies, I make moan:
Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.
Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
As thou art a knight peerless.'

Thus he read;
And ever in the reading lords and dames
Wept, looking often from his face who read

To hers which lay so silent, and at times,
So touch'd were they, half-thinking that her lips
Who had devised the letter moved again.

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them all:
'My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear,
Know that for this most gentle maiden's death
Right heavy am I; for good she was and true,
But loved me with a love beyond all love
In women, whomsoever I have known.
Yet to be loved makes not to love again;
Not at my years, however it hold in youth.
I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave
No cause, not willingly, for such a love.
To this I call my friends in testimony,
Her brethren, and her father, who himself
Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,
To break her passion, some discourtesy
Against my nature: what I could, I did.
I left her and I bade her no farewell;
Tho', had I dreamt the damsel would have died,
I might have put my wits to some rough use,
And help'd her from herself.'

Then said the Queen —
Sea was her wrath, yet working after storm:
'Ye might at least have done her so much grace,
Fair lord, as would have help'd her from her death.'
He raised his head, their eyes met and hers fell,
He adding:
'Queen, she would not be content
Save that I wedded her, which could not be.
Then might she follow me thro' the world, she ask'd;
It could not be. I told her that her love

Was but the flash of youth, would darken down,
To rise hereafter in a stiller flame
Toward one more worthy of her — then would I,
More specially were he she wedded poor,
Estate them with large land and territory
In mine own realm beyond the narrow seas,
To keep them in all joyance: more than this
I could not; this she would not, and she died.'

He pausing, Arthur answer'd: 'O my knight,
It will be to thy worship, as my knight,
And mine, as head of all our Table Round,
To see that she be buried worshipfully.'

So toward that shrine which then in all the realm
Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went
The marshall'd Order of their Table Round,
And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see
The maiden buried, not as one unknown,
Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,
And mass, and rolling music, like a queen.
And when the knights had laid her comely head
Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,
Then Arthur spake among them: 'Let her tomb
Be costly, and her image thereupon,
And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet
Be carven, and her lily in her hand.
And let the story of her dolorous voyage
For all true hearts be blazon'd on her tomb
In letters gold and azure!' which was wrought
Thereafter; but when now the lords and dames
And people, from the high door streaming, brake
Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,
Who mark'd Sir Lancelot where he moved apart,

Drew near, and sigh'd in passing, 'Lancelot,
Forgive me; mine was jealousy in love.'
He answer'd with his eyes upon the ground,
'That is love's curse; pass on, my Queen, forgiven.'
But Arthur, who beheld his cloudy brows,
Approach'd him, and with full affection said:

'Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have
Most joy and most affiance, for I know
What thou hast been in battle by my side,
And many a time have watch'd thee at the tilt
Strike down the lusty and long practised knight
And let the younger and unskill'd go by
To win his honor and to make his name,
And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man
Made to be loved; but now I would to God,
Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,
Thou couldst have loved this maiden, shaped, it seems,
By God for thee alone, and from her face,
If one may judge the living by the dead,
Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
Who might have brought thee, now a lonely man
Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons
Born to the glory of thy name and fame,
My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the Lake.'

Then answer'd Lancelot: 'Fair she was, my King,
Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be.
To doubt her fairness were to want an eye,
To doubt her pureness were to want a heart —
Yea, to be loved, if what is worthy love
Could bind him, but free love will not be bound.'

'Free love, so bound, were freest,' said the King.
'Let love be free; free love is for the best:

And, after heaven, on our dull side of death,
What should be best, if not so pure a love
Clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee
She fail'd to bind, tho' being, as I think,
Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know.'

And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but he went,
And at the inrunning of a little brook
Sat by the river in a cove, and watch'd
The high reed wave, and lifted up his eyes
And saw the barge that brought her moving down,
Far-off, a blot upon the stream, and said
Low in himself: 'Ah, simple heart and sweet,
Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love
Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for thy soul?
Ay, that will I. Farewell too — now at last —
Farewell, fair lily. "Jealousy in love?"
Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous pride?
Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,
May not your crescent fear for name and fame
Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes?
Why did the King dwell on my name to me?
Mine own name shames me, seeming a reproach,
Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake
Caught from his mother's arms — the wondrous one
Who passes thro' the vision of the night —
She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns
Heard on the winding waters, eve and morn
She kiss'd me saying, "Thou art fair, my child,
As a king's son," and often in her arms
She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere.
Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er it be!
For what am I? what profits me my name
Of greatest knight? I fought for it, and have it:

Pleasure to have it, none; to lose it, pain:
Now grown a part of me: but what use in it?
To make men worse by making my sin known?
Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great?
Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man
Not after Arthur's heart! I needs must break
These bonds that so defame me: not without
She wills it: would I, if she will'd it? nay,
Who knows? but if I would not, then may God,
I pray him, send a sudden angel down
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,
And fling me deep in that forgotten mere,
Among the tumbled fragments of the hills.'

So groan'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful pain,
Not knowing he should die a holy man.

THE HOLY GRAIL.

FROM noiseful arms, and acts of prowess done
In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale
Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd the Pure,
Had past into the silent life of prayer,
Praise, fast, and alms ; and leaving for the cowl
The helmet in an abbey far away
From Camelot, there, and not long after, died.

And one, a fellow-monk among the rest,
Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the rest,
And honor'd him, and wrought into his heart
A way by love that waken'd love within,
To answer that which came : and as they sat
Beneath a world-old yew-tree, darkening half
The cloisters, on a gustful April morn
That puff'd the swaying branches into smoke
Above them, ere the summer when he died,
The monk Ambrosius question'd Percivale :

'O brother, I have seen this yew-tree smoke,
Spring after spring, for half a hundred years ;
For never have I known the world without,
Nor ever stray'd beyond the pale : but thee,
When first thou camest — such a courtesy
Spake thro' the limbs and in the voice — I knew
For one of those who eat in Arthur's hall ;
For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,

Some true, some light, but every one of you
Stamp'd with the image of the King; and now
Tell me, what drove thee from the Table Round,
My brother? was it earthly passion crost?'

'Nay,' said the knight; 'for no such passion mine.
But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail
Drove me from all vainglories, rivalries,
And earthly heats that spring and sparkle out
Among us in the jousts, while women watch
Who wins, who falls; and waste the spiritual strength
Within us, better offer'd up to Heaven.'

To whom the monk: 'The Holy Grail! — I trust
We are green in Heaven's eyes; but here too much
We moulder — as to things without I mean —
Yet one of your own knights, a guest of ours,
Told us of this in our refectory,
But spake with such a sadness and so low
We heard not half of what he said. What is it?
The phantom of a cup that comes and goes?'

'Nay, monk! what phantom?' answer'd Percivale.
'The cup, the cup itself, from which our Lord
Drank at the last sad supper with his own.
This, from the blessed land of Aromat —
After the day of darkness, when the dead
Went wandering o'er Moriah — the good saint
Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.
And there awhile it bode; and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at once,
By faith, of all his ills. But then the times

Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to heaven, and disappear'd.'

To whom the monk: 'From our old books I know
That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,
And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to build;
And there he built with wattles from the marsh
A little lonely church in days of yore,
For so they say, these books of ours, but seem
Mute of this miracle, far as I have read.
But who first saw the holy thing to-day?'

'A woman,' answer'd Percivale, 'a nun,
And one no further off in blood from me
Than sister; and if ever holy maid
With knees of adoration wore the stone,
A holy maid; tho' never maiden glow'd,
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,
With such a fervent flame of human love,
Which, being rudely blunted, glanced and shot
Only to holy things; to prayer and praise
She gave herself, to fast and alms. And yet,
Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,
And the strange sound of an adulterous race,
Across the iron grating of her cell
Beat, and she pray'd and fasted all the more.

'And he to whom she told her sins, or what
Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,
A man wellnigh a hundred winters old,
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,
A legend handed down thro' five or six,

And each of these a hundred winters old,
From our Lord's time. And when King Arthur made
His Table Round, and all men's hearts became
Clean for a season, surely he had thought
That now the Holy Grail would come again;
But sin broke out. Ah, Christ, that it would come,
And heal the world of all their wickedness!
"O Father!" ask'd the maiden, "might it come
To me by prayer and fasting?" "Nay," said he,
"I know not, for thy heart is pure as snow."
And so she pray'd and fasted, till the sun
Shone, and the wind blew, thro' her, and I thought
She might have risen and floated when I saw her.

'For on a day she sent to speak with me.
And when she came to speak, behold her eyes
Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,
Beautiful in the light of holiness!
And "O my brother Percivale," she said,
"Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy Grail:
For, waked at dead of night, I heard a sound
As of a silver horn from o'er the hills
Blown, and I thought, 'It is not Arthur's use
To hunt by moonlight;' and the slender sound
As from a distance beyond distance grew
Coming upon me — O never harp nor horn,
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with hand,
Was like that music as it came; and then
Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver beam,
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,
Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,
Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed
With rosy colors leaping on the wall;

And then the music faded, and the Grail
Past, and the beam decay'd, and from the walls
The rosy quiverings died into the night.
So now the Holy Thing is here again
Among us, brother, fast thou too and pray,
And tell thy brother knights to fast and pray,
That so perchance the vision may be seen
By thee and those, and all the world be heal'd."

'Then leaving the pale nun, I spake of this
To all men; and myself fasted and pray'd
Always, and many among us many a week
Fasted and pray'd even to the uttermost,
Expectant of the wonder that would be.

'And one there was among us, ever moved
Among us in white armor, Galahad.
"God make thee good as thou art beautiful!"
Said Arthur, when he dubb'd him knight; and none
In so young youth was ever made a knight
Till Galahad; and this Galahad, when he heard
My sister's vision, fill'd me with amaze;
His eyes became so like her own, they seem'd
Hers, and himself her brother more than I.

'Sister or brother none had he; but some
Call'd him a son of Lancelot, and some said
Begotten by enchantment — chatterers they,
Like birds of passage piping up and down,
That gape for flies — we know not whence they come;
For when was Lancelot wanderingly lewd?

'But she, the wan sweet maiden, shore away
Clean from her forehead all that wealth of hair

Which made a silken mat-work for her feet;
And out of this she plaited broad and long
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thread
And crimson in the belt a strange device,
A crimson grail within a silver beam;
And saw the bright boy-knight, and bound it on him,
Saying: "My knight, my love, my knight of heaven,
O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,
I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt.
Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,
And break thro' all, till one will crown thee king
Far in the spiritual city:" and as she spake
She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
On him, and he believed in her belief.

'Then came a year of miracle: O brother,
In our great hall there stood a vacant chair,
Fashion'd by Merlin ere he past away,
And carven with strange figures; and in and out
The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll
Of letters in a tongue no man could read.
And Merlin call'd it "the Siege Perilous,"
Perilous for good and ill; "for there," he said,
"No man could sit but he should lose himself:"
And once by misadvertence Merlin sat
In his own chair, and so was lost; but he,
Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom,
Cried, "If I lose myself, I save myself!"

'Then on a summer night it came to pass,
While the great banquet lay along the hall,
That Galahad would sit down in Merlin's chair.

'And all at once, as there we sat, we heard
A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
And rending, and a blast, and overhead
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear than day;
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it past.
But every knight beheld his fellow's face
As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
And staring each at other like dumb men
Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.

'I sware a vow before them all, that I,
Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride
A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,
Until I found and saw it, as the nun
My sister saw it; and Galahad sware the vow,
And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin, sware,
And Lancelot sware, and many among the knights,
And Gawain sware, and louder than the rest.'

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, asking him,
'What said the King? Did Arthur take the vow?

'Nay, for my lord,' said Percivale, 'the King,
Was not in hall: for early that same day,
Scaped thro' a cavern from a bandit bold,
An outraged maiden sprang into the hall
Crying on help: for all her shining hair
Was smear'd with earth, and either milky arm
Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all she wore
Torn as a sail that leaves the rope is torn

In tempest: so the King arose and went
To smoke the scandalous hive of those wild bees
That made such honey in his realm. Howbeit
Some little of this marvel he too saw,
Returning o'er the plain that then began
To darken under Camelot; whence the King
Look'd up, calling aloud, "Lo, there! the roofs
Of our great hall are roll d in thunder-smoke!
Pray Heaven, they be not smitten by the bolt!"
For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,
As having there so oft with all his knights
Feasted, and as the stateliest under heaven.

'O brother, had you known our mighty hall,
Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago!
For all the sacred mount of Camelot,
And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,
Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,
By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing brook,
Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin built.
And four great zones of sculpture, set betwixt
With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall:
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
And in the second men are slaying beasts,
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
And on the fourth are men with growing wings,
And over all one statue in the mould
Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,
And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern Star.
And eastward fronts the statue, and the crown
And both the wings are made of gold, and flame
At sunrise till the people in far fields,
Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,
Behold it, crying, "We have still a king."

'And, brother, had you known our hall within,
Broader and higher than any in all the lands!
Where twelve great windows blazon Arthur's wars,
And all the light that falls upon the board
Streams thro' the twelve great battles of our King.
Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,
Wealthy with wandering lines of mount and mere,
Where Arthur finds the brand Excalibur.
And also one to the west, and counter to it,
And blank: and who shall blazon it? when and how?—
O, there, perchance, when all our wars are done,
The brand Excalibur will be cast away!

'So to this hall full quickly rode the King,
In horror lest the work by Merlin wrought,
Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish, wrapt
In unremorseful folds of rolling fire.
And in he rode, and up I glanced, and saw
The golden dragon sparkling over all;
And many of those who burnt the hold, their arms
Hack'd, and their foreheads grimed with smoke and sear'd,
Follow'd, and in among bright faces, ours,
Full of the vision, prest: and then the King
Spake to me, being nearest, "Percivale,"—
Because the hall was all in tumult—some
Vowing, and some protesting,—"what is this?"

'O brother, when I told him what had chanced,
My sister's vision and the rest, his face
Darken'd, as I have seen it more than once,
When some brave deed seem'd to be done in vain,
Darken; and "Woe is me, my knights," he cried,
"Had I been here, ye had not sworn the vow."
Bold was mine answer, "Had thyself been here,

My King, thou wouldst have sworn." "Yea, yea," said he,
"Art thou so bold and hast not seen the Grail?"

'"Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I saw the light,
But since I did not see the holy thing,
I sware a vow to follow it till I saw."

'Then when he ask'd us, knight by knight, if any
Had seen it, all their answers were as one:
"Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn our vows."

'"Lo, now," said Arthur, "have ye seen a cloud?
What go ye into the wilderness to see?"

'Then Galahad on the sudden, and in a voice
Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, call'd,
"But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—
"O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me."'

'"Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the King, "for such
As thou art is the vision, not for these.
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—
Holier is none, my Percivale, than she—
A sign to maim this Order which I made.
But ye that follow but the leader's bell,"—
Brother, the King was hard upon his knights,—
"Taliessin is our fullest throat of song,
And one hath sung and all the dumb will sing.
Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overborne
Five knights at once, and every younger knight,
Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot,
Till overborne by one, he learns—and ye,
What are ye? Galahads?—no, nor Percivales"—

For thus it pleased the King to range me close
After Sir Galahad; — "nay," said he, "but men
With strength and will to right the wrong'd, of power
To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,
Knights that in twelve great battles splash'd and dyed
The strong White Horse in his own heathen blood —
But one hath seen, and all the blind will see.
Go, since your vows are sacred, being made:
Yet — for ye know the cries of all my realm
Pass thro' this hall — how often, O my knights,
Your places being vacant at my side,
This chance of noble deeds will come and go
Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering fires
Lost in the quagmire! Many of you, yea most,
Return no more: ye think I show myself
Too dark a prophet: come now, let us meet
The morrow morn once more in one full field
Of gracious pastime, that once more the King,
Before ye leave him for this quest, may count
The yet-unbroken strength of all his knights,
Rejoicing in that Order which he made."

'So when the sun broke next from underground,
All the great Table of our Arthur closed
And clash'd in such a tourney and so full,
So many lances broken — never yet
Had Camelot seen the like since Arthur came;
And I myself and Galahad, for a strength
Was in us from the vision, overthrew
So many knights that all the people cried,
And almost burst the barriers in their heat,
Shouting, "Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale!"

'But when the next day brake from underground —
O brother, had you known our Camelot,

Built by old kings, age after age, so old
The King himself had fears that it would fall,
So strange, and rich, and dim ; for where the roofs
Totter'd toward each other in the sky,
Met foreheads all along the street of those
Who watch'd us pass ; and lower, and where the long
Rich galleries, lady-laden, weigh'd the necks
Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,
Thicker than drops from thunder, showers of flowers
Fell as we past ; and men and boys astride
On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan,
At all the corners, named us each by name,
Calling "God speed!" but in the ways below
The knights and ladies wept, and rich and poor
Wept, and the King himself could hardly speak
For grief, and all in middle street the Queen,
Who rode by Lancelot, wail'd and shriek'd aloud,
"This madness has come on us for our sins."
So to the Gate of the Three Queens we came,
Where Arthur's wars are render'd mystically,
And thence departed every one his way.

'And I was lifted up in heart, and thought
Of all my late-shown prowess in the lists,
How my strong lance had beaten down the knights,
So many and famous names ; and never yet
Had heaven appear'd so blue, nor earth so green,
For all my blood danced in me, and I knew
That I should light upon the Holy Grail.

'Thereafter, the dark warning of our King,
That most of us would follow wandering fires,
Came like a driving gloom across my mind.
Then every evil word I had spoken once,

And every evil thought I had thought of old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, "This quest is not for thee."
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
And I was thirsty even unto death;
And I, too, cried, "This quest is not for thee."

'And on I rode, and when I thought my thirst
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then a brook
With one sharp rapid, where the crisping white
Play'd ever back upon the sloping wave
And took both ear and eye; and o'er the brook
Were apple-trees, and apples by the brook
Fallen, and on the lawns. "I will rest here,"
I said, "I am not worthy of the quest;"
But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And thirsting in a land of sand and thorns.

'And then behold a woman at a door
Spinning; and fair the house whereby she sat,
And kind the woman's eyes and innocent,
And all her bearing gracious; and she rose
Opening her arms to meet me, as who should say,
"Rest here;" but when I touch'd her, lo! she, too,
Fell into dust and nothing, and the house
Became no better than a broken shed,
And in it a dead babe; and also this
Fell into dust, and I was left alone.

'And on I rode, and greater was my thirst.
Then flash'd a yellow gleam across the world,

And where it smote the plowshare in the field
The plowman left his plowing and fell down
Before it ; where it glitter'd on her pail
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell down
Before it, and I knew not why, but thought
"The sun is rising," tho' the sun had risen.
Then was I ware of one that on me moved
In golden armor with a crown of gold
About a casque all jewels, and his horse
In golden armor jewelled everywhere :
And on the splendor came, flashing me blind,
And seem'd to me the lord of all the world,
Being so huge. But when I thought he meant
To crush me, moving on me, lo ! he, too,
Open'd his arms to embrace me as he came,
And up I went and touch'd him, and he, too,
Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And wearying in a land of sand and thorns.

'And I rode on and found a mighty hill,
And on the top a city wall'd : the spires
Prick'd with incredible pinnacles into heaven.
And by the gateway stirr'd a crowd ; and these
Cried to me climbing, "Welcome, Percivale !
Thou mightiest and thou purest among men !"
And glad was I and clomb, but found at top
No man, nor any voice. And thence I past
Far thro' a ruinous city, and I saw
That man had once dwelt there ; but there I found
Only one man of an exceeding age.
"Where is that goodly company," said I,
"That so cried out upon me ?" and he had
Scarce any voice to answer, and yet gasp'd,
"Whence and what art thou ?" and even as he spoke

Fell into dust and disappear'd, and I
Was left alone once more and cried in grief,
"Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself
And touch it, it will crumble into dust!"

'And thence I dropt into a lowly vale, 44c
Low as the hill was high, and where the vale
Was lowest found a chapel, and thereby
A holy hermit in a hermitage,
To whom I told my phantoms, and he said:

'"O son, thou hast not true humility,
The highest virtue, mother of them all;
For when the Lord of all things made Himself
Naked of glory for his mortal change,
'Take thou my robe,' she said, 'for all is thine,'
And all her form shone forth with sudden light 45a
So that the angels were amazed, and she
Follow'd Him down, and like a flying star
Led on the gray-hair'd wisdom of the east;
But her thou hast not known: for what is this
Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy sins?
Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
As Galahad." When the hermit made an end,
In silver armor suddenly Galahad shone
Before us, and against the chapel door
Laid lance and enter'd, and we knelt in prayer. 46c
And there the hermit slaked my burning thirst,
And at the sacring of the mass I saw
The holy elements alone; but he,
"Saw ye no more? I, Galahad, saw the Grail,
The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine:
I saw the fiery face as of a child
That smote itself into the bread and went;

And hither am I come ; and never yet
Hath what thy sister taught me first to see,
This holy thing, fail'd from my side, nor come
Cover'd, but moving with me night and day,
Fainter by day, but always in the night
Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken'd marsh
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood-red. And in the strength of this I rode,
Shattering all evil customs everywhere,
And past thro' Pagan realms, and made them mine,
And clash'd with Pagan hordes, and bore them down,
And broke thro' all, and in the strength of this
Come victor. But my time is hard at hand,
And hence I go ; and one will crown me king
Far in the spiritual city ; and come thou, too,
For thou shalt see the vision when I go."

'While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling on mine,
Drew me, with power upon me, till I grew
One with him, to believe as he believed.
Then, when the day began to wane, we went.

'There rose a hill that none but man could climb,
Scarr'd with a hundred wintry water-courses —
Storm at the top, and when we gain'd it, storm
Round us and death ; for every moment glanced
His silver arms and gloom'd : so quick and thick
The lightnings here and there to left and right
Struck, till the dry old trunks about us, dead,
Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
Sprang into fire : and at the base we found
On either hand, as far as eye could see,
A great black swamp and of an evil smell,

Part black, part whiten'd with the bones of men,
Not to be crost, save that some ancient king
Had built a way, where, link'd with many a bridge,
A thousand piers ran into the great Sea.
And Galahad fled along them bridge by bridge,
And every bridge as quickly as he crost
Sprang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I yearn'd
To follow; and thrice above him all the heavens
Open'd and blazed with thunder such as seem'd
Shoutings of all the sons of God: and first
At once I saw him far on the great Sea,
In silver-shining armor starry-clear;
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud.
And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,
If boat it were — I saw not whence it came.
And when the heavens open'd and blazed again
Roaring, I saw him like a silver star —
And had he set the sail, or had the boat
Become a living creature clad with wings?
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Redder than any rose, a joy to me,
For now I knew the veil had been withdrawn.
Then in a moment when they blazed again
Opening, I saw the least of little stars
Down on the waste, and straight beyond the star
I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
And gateways in a glory like one pearl —
No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints —
Strike from the sea; and from the star there shot
A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
Which never eyes on earth again shall see.
Then fell the floods of heaven drowning the deep,

And how my feet recrost the deathful ridge
No memory in me lives; but that I touch'd
The chapel-doors at dawn I know; and thence
Taking my war-horse from the holy man,
Glad that no phantom vext me more, return'd
To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's wars.'

'O brother,' ask'd Ambrosius, — 'for in sooth
These ancient books — and they would win thee — teem,
Only I find not there this Holy Grail,
With miracles and marvels like to these,
Not all unlike; which oftentime I read,
Who read but on my breviary with ease,
Till my head swims, and then go forth and pass
Down to the little thorpe that lies so close,
And almost plaster'd like a martin's nest
To these old walls — and mingle with our folk;
And knowing every honest face of theirs
As well as ever shepherd knew his sheep,
And every homely secret in their hearts,
Delight myself with gossip and old wives,
And ills and aches, and teethings, lyings-in,
And mirthful sayings, children of the place,
That have no meaning half a league away;
Or lulling random squabbles when they rise,
Chafferings and chatterings at the market-cross,
Rejoice, small man, in this small world of mine,
Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs —
O brother, saving this Sir Galahad,
Came ye on none but phantoms in your quest,
No man, no woman?'

Then Sir Percivale:
'All men, to one so bound by such a vow,

And women were as phantoms. O, my brother,
Why wilt thou shame me to confess to thee
How far I falter'd from my quest and vow?
For after I had lain so many nights,
A bed-mate of the snail and eft and snake,
In grass and burdock, I was changed to wan
And meagre, and the vision had not come;
And then I chanced upon a goodly town
With one great dwelling in the middle of it.
Thither I made, and there was I disarm'd
By maidens each as fair as any flower;
But when they led me into hall, behold,
The princess of that castle was the one,
Brother, and that one only, who had ever
Made my heart leap; for when I moved of old
A slender page about her father's hall,
And she a slender maiden, all my heart
Went after her with longing, yet we twain
Had never kiss'd a kiss or vow'd a vow.
And now I came upon her once again,
And one had wedded her, and he was dead,
And all his land and wealth and state were hers.
And while I tarried, every day she set
A banquet richer than the day before
By me, for all her longing and her will
Was toward me as of old; till one fair morn,
I walking to and fro beside a stream
That flash'd across her orchard underneath
Her castle-walls, she stole upon my walk,
And calling me the greatest of all knights,
Embraced me, and so kiss'd me the first time,
And gave herself and all her wealth to me.
Then I remember'd Arthur's warning word,
That most of us would follow wandering fires,

And the quest faded in my heart. Anon,
The heads of all her people drew to me,
With supplication both of knees and tongue:
"We have heard of thee: thou art our greatest knight,
Our Lady says it, and we well believe:
Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,
And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land."
O me, my brother! but one night my vow
Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,
But wail'd and wept, and hated mine own self,
And even the holy quest, and all but her;
Then after I was join'd with Galahad
Cared not for her nor anything upon earth.'

Then said the monk: 'Poor men, when yule is cold,
Must be content to sit by little fires.
And this am I, so that ye care for me
Ever so little; yea, and blest be Heaven
That brought thee here to this poor house of ours
Where all the brethren are so hard, to warm
My cold heart with a friend: but O the pity
To find thine own first love once more — to hold,
Hold her a wealthy bride within thine arms,
Or all but hold, and then — cast her aside,
Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed!
For we that want the warmth of double life,
We that are plagued with dreams of something sweet
Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich, —
Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthly-wise,
Seeing I never stray'd beyond the cell,
But live like an old badger in his earth,
With earth about him everywhere, despite
All fast and penance. Saw ye none beside,
None of your knights?'

'Yea, so,' said Percivale:
'One night my pathway swerving east, I saw
The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bors
All in the middle of the rising moon,
And toward him spurr'd, and hail'd him, and he me,
And each made joy of either; then he ask'd:
"Where is he? hast thou seen him — Lancelot? — Once,"
Said good Sir Bors, "he dash'd across me — mad,
And maddening what he rode; and when I cried,
'Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest
So holy?' Lancelot shouted, 'Stay me not!
I have been the sluggard, and I ride apace,
For now there is a lion in the way!'
So vanish'd."

'Then Sir Bors had ridden on
Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot,
Because his former madness, once the talk
And scandal of our table, had return'd;
For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship him
That ill to him is ill to them, to Bors
Beyond the rest: he well had been content
Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have seen,
The Holy Cup of healing; and, indeed,
Being so clouded with his grief and love,
Small heart was his after the holy quest;
If God would send the vision, well; if not,
The quest and he were in the hands of Heaven.

'And then, with small adventure met, Sir Bors
Rode to the lonest tract of all the realm,
And found a people there among their crags,
Our race and blood, a remnant that were left
Paynim amid their circles, and the stones

They pitch up straight to heaven; and their wise men
Were strong in that old magic which can trace
The wandering of the stars, and scoff'd at him
And this high quest as at a simple thing,
Told him he follow'd — almost Arthur's words —
A mocking fire: "what other fire than he
Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom blows,
And the sea rolls, and all the world is warm'd?"
And when his answer chafed them, the rough crowd, 67c
Hearing he had a difference with their priests,
Seized him, and bound and plunged him into a cell
Of great piled stones; and lying bounden there
In darkness thro' innumerable hours
He heard the hollow-ringing heavens sweep
Over him till by miracle — what else? —
Heavy as it was, a great stone slipt and fell,
Such as no wind could move; and thro' the gap
Glimmer'd the streaming scud: then came a night
Still as the day was loud, and thro' the gap 68c
The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table Round —
For, brother, so one night, because they roll
Thro' such a round in heaven, we named the stars,
Rejoicing in ourselves and in our King —
And these, like bright eyes of familiar friends,
In on him shone: "And then to me, to me,"
Said good Sir Bors, "beyond all hopes of mine,
Who scarce had pray'd or ask'd it for myself —
Across the seven clear stars — O grace to me! —
In color like the fingers of a hand 69c
Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail
Glided and past, and close upon it peal'd
A sharp quick thunder." Afterwards, a maid,
Who kept our holy faith among her kin
In secret, entering, loosed and let him go.'

To whom the monk: 'And I remember now
That pelican on the casque: Sir Bors it was
Who spake so low and sadly at our board;
And mighty reverent at our grace was he:
A square-set man and honest; and his eyes,
An outdoor sign of all the warmth within,
Smiled with his lips — a smile beneath a cloud,
But heaven had meant it for a sunny one:
Ay, ay, Sir Bors, who else? But when ye reach'd
The city, found ye all your knights return'd,
Or was there sooth in Arthur's prophecy,
Tell me, and what said each, and what the King?'

Then answer'd Percivale: 'And that can I,
Brother, and truly; since the living words
Of so great men as Lancelot and our King
Pass not from door to door and out again,
But sit within the house. O, when we reach'd
The city, our horses stumbling as they trode
On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,
Crack'd basilisks, and splinter'd cockatrices,
And shatter'd talbots, which had left the stones
Raw that they fell from, brought us to the hall.

'And there sat Arthur on the dais-throne,
And those that had gone out upon the quest,
Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of them,
And those that had not, stood before the King,
Who, when he saw me, rose and bade me hail,
Saying: "A welfare in thine eyes reproves
Our fear of some disastrous chance for thee
On hill or plain, at sea or flooding ford.
So fierce a gale made havoc here of late
Among the strange devices of our kings,

Yea, shook this newer, stronger hall of ours,
And from the statue Merlin moulded for us
Half-wrench'd a golden wing; but now — the quest,
This vision — hast thou seen the Holy Cup,
That Joseph brought of old to Glastonbury?"

'So when I told him all thyself hast heard,
Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve
To pass away into the quiet life,
He answer'd not, but, sharply turning, ask'd
Of Gawain, "Gawain, was this quest for thee?"

'"Nay, lord," said Gawain, "not for such as I.
Therefore I communed with a saintly man,
Who made me sure the quest was not for me;
For I was much a-wearied of the quest,
But found a silk pavilion in a field,
And merry maidens in it; and then this gale
Tore my pavilion from the tenting-pin,
And blew my merry maidens all about
With all discomfort; yea, and but for this,
My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant to me."

'He ceased; and Arthur turn'd to whom at first
He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering, push'd
Athwart the throng to Lancelot, caught his hand,
Held it, and there, half-hidden by him, stood,
Until the King espied him, saying to him,
"Hail, Bors! if ever loyal man and true
Could see it, thou hast seen the Grail;" and Bors,
"Ask me not, for I may not speak of it:
I saw it;" and the tears were in his eyes.

'Then there remain'd but Lancelot, for the rest
Spake but of sundry perils in the storm;

Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,
Our Arthur kept his best until the last;
"Thou, too, my Lancelot," ask'd the King, "my friend,
Our mightiest, hath this quest avail'd for thee?"

'"Our mightiest!" answer'd Lancelot, with a groan;
"O King!"—and when he paused methought I spied
A dying fire of madness in his eyes—
'O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
Happier are those that welter in their sin,
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for slime,
Slime of the ditch; but in me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,
Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung
Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower
And poisonous grew together, each as each,
Not to be pluck'd asunder; and when thy knights
Sware, I sware with them only in the hope
That could I touch or see the Holy Grail
They might be pluck'd asunder. Then I spake
To one most holy saint, who wept and said
That, save they could be pluck'd asunder, all
My quest were but in vain; to whom I vow'd
That I would work according as he will'd.
And forth I went, and while I yearn'd and strove
To tear the twain asunder in my heart,
My madness came upon me as of old,
And whipt me into waste fields far away.
There was I beaten down by little men,
Mean knights, to whom the moving of my sword
And shadow of my spear had been enow
To scare them from me once; and then I came
All in my folly to the naked shore,
Wide flats, where nothing but coarse grasses grew;

But such a blast, my King, began to blow,
So loud a blast along the shore and sea,
Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,
Tho' heapt in mounds and ridges all the sea
Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
Swept like a river, and the clouded heavens
Were shaken with the motion and the sound.
And blackening in the sea-foam sway'd a boat,
Half-swallow'd in it, anchor'd with a chain ;
And in my madness to myself I said,
'I will embark and I will lose myself,
And in the great sea wash away my sin.'
I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat.
Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,
And with me drove the moon and all the stars ;
And the wind fell, and on the seventh night
I heard the shingle grinding in the surge,
And felt the boat shock earth, and looking up,
Behold, the enchanted towers of Carbonek,
A castle like a rock upon a rock,
With chasm-like portals open to the sea,
And steps that met the breaker! There was none
Stood near it but a lion on each side
That kept the entry, and the moon was full.
Then from the boat I leapt, and up the stairs,
There drew my sword. With sudden-flaring manes
Those two great beasts rose upright like a man,
Each gript a shoulder, and I stood between,
And, when I would have smitten them, heard a voice,
'Doubt not, go forward ; if thou doubt, the beasts
Will tear thee piecemeal.' Then with violence
The sword was dash'd from out my hand, and fell.
And up into the sounding hall I past ;
But nothing in the sounding hall I saw.

No bench nor table, painting on the wall
Or shield of knight, only the rounded moon
Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea.
But always in the quiet house I heard,
Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,
A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower
To the eastward. Up I climb'd a thousand steps
With pain; as in a dream I seem'd to climb
For ever: at the last I reach'd a door,
A light was in the crannies, and I heard,
'Glory and joy and honor to our Lord
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail!'
Then in my madness I essay'd the door;
It gave, and thro' a stormy glare, a heat
As from a seven-times-heated furnace, I,
Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,
With such a fierceness that I swoon'd away —
O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
All pall'd in crimson samite, and around
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and eyes!
And but for all my madness and my sin,
And then my swooning, I had sworn I saw
That which I saw; but what I saw was veil'd
And cover'd, and this quest was not for me."

'So speaking, and here ceasing, Lancelot left
The hall long silent, till Sir Gawain — nay,
Brother, I need not tell thee foolish words, —
A reckless and irreverent knight was he,
Now bolden'd by the silence of his King, —
Well, I will tell thee: "O King, my liege," he said,
"Hath Gawain fail'd in any quest of thine?
When have I stinted stroke in foughten field?
But as for thine, my good friend Percivale,

Thy holy nun and thou have driven men mad,
Yea, made our mightiest madder than our least.
But by mine eyes and by mine ears I swear,
I will be deafer than the blue-eyed cat,
And thrice as blind as any noonday owl,
To holy virgins in their ecstasies,
Henceforward."

'"Deafer," said the blameless King,
"Gawain, and blinder unto holy things,
Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,
Being too blind to have desire to see.
But if indeed there came a sign from heaven,
Blessed are Bors, Lancelot, and Percivale,
For these have seen according to their sight.
For every fiery prophet in old times,
And all the sacred madness of the bard,
When God made music thro' them, could but speak
His music by the framework and the chord;
And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth.

'"Nay — but thou errest, Lancelot: never yet
Could all of true and noble in knight and man
Twine round one sin, whatever it might be,
With such a closeness but apart there grew,
Save that he were the swine thou spakest of,
Some root of knighthood and pure nobleness;
Whereto see thou, that it may bear its flower.

'"And spake I not too truly, O my knights?
Was I too dark a prophet when I said
To those who went upon the Holy Quest,
That most of them would follow wandering fires,
Lost in the quagmire? — lost to me and gone,

And left me gazing at a barren board,
And a lean Order — scarce return'd a tithe —
And out of those to whom the vision came
My greatest hardly will believe he saw.
Another hath beheld it afar off,
And, leaving human wrongs to right themselves,
Cares but to pass into the silent life.
And one hath had the vision face to face,
And now his chair desires him here in vain,
However they may crown him otherwhere.

'"And some among you held that if the King
Had seen the sight he would have sworn the vow:
Not easily, seeing that the King must guard
That which he rules, and is but as the hind
To whom a space of land is given to plow,
Who may not wander from the allotted field
Before his work be done, but, being done,
Let visions of the night or of the day
Come as they will; and many a time they come,
Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,
This air that smites his forehead is not air
But vision — yea, his very hand and foot —
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again: ye have seen what ye have seen."

'So spake the King: I knew not all he meant.'

PELLEAS AND ETTARRE.

King Arthur made new knights to fill the gap
Left by the Holy Quest; and as he sat
In hall at old Caerleon, the high doors
Were softly sunder'd, and thro' these a youth,
Pelleas, and the sweet smell of the fields
Past, and the sunshine came along with him.

'Make me thy knight, because I know, Sir King,
All that belongs to knighthood, and I love.'
Such was his cry: for having heard the King
Had let proclaim a tournament — the prize
A golden circlet and a knightly sword,
Full fain had Pelleas for his lady won
The golden circlet, for himself the sword:
And there were those who knew him near the King,
And promised for him; and Arthur made him knight.

And this new knight, Sir Pelleas of the Isles —
But lately come to his inheritance,
And lord of many a barren isle was he —
Riding at noon, a day or twain before,
Across the forest call'd of Dean, to find
Caerleon and the King, had felt the sun
Beat like a strong knight on his helm and reel'd
Almost to falling from his horse, but saw
Near him a mound of even-sloping side
Whereon a hundred stately beeches grew,

And here and there great hollies under them;
But for a mile all round was open space
And fern and heath. And slowly Pelleas drew
To that dim day, then, binding his good horse
To a tree, cast himself down; and as he lay
At random looking over the brown earth
Thro' that green-glooming twilight of the grove,
It seem'd to Pelleas that the fern without
Burnt as a living fire of emeralds,
So that his eyes were dazzled looking at it.
Then o'er it crost the dimness of a cloud
Floating, and once the shadow of a bird
Flying, and then a fawn; and his eyes closed.
And since he loved all maidens, but no maid
In special, half-awake he whisper'd: 'Where?
O where? I love thee, tho' I know thee not.
For fair thou art and pure as Guinevere,
And I will make thee with my spear and sword
As famous — O my Queen, my Guinevere,
For I will be thine Arthur when we meet.'

Suddenly waken'd with a sound of talk
And laughter at the limit of the wood,
And glancing thro' the hoary boles, he saw,
Strange as to some old prophet might have seem'd
A vision hovering on a sea of fire,
Damsels in divers colors like the cloud
Of sunset and sunrise, and all of them
On horses, and the horses richly trapt
Breast-high in that bright line of bracken stood;
And all the damsels talk'd confusedly,
And one was pointing this way and one that,
Because the way was lost.

And Pelleas rose,
And loosed his horse, and led him to the light.
There she that seem'd the chief among them said:
'In happy time behold our pilot-star!
Youth, we are damsels-errant, and we ride,
Arm'd as ye see, to tilt against the knights
There at Caerleon, but have lost our way:
To right? to left? straight forward? back again?
Which? tell us quickly.'

Pelleas gazing thought,
'Is Guinevere herself so beautiful?'
For large her violet eyes look'd, and her bloom
A rosy dawn kindled in stainless heavens,
And round her limbs, mature in womanhood;
And slender was her hand and small her shape;
And but for those large eyes, the haunts of scorn,
She might have seem'd a toy to trifle with,
And pass and care no more. But while he gazed
The beauty of her flesh abash'd the boy,
As tho' it were the beauty of her soul;
For as the base man, judging of the good,
Puts his own baseness in him by default
Of will and nature, so did Pelleas lend
All the young beauty of his own soul to hers,
Believing her, and when she spake to him
Stammer'd, and could not make her a reply.
For out of the waste islands had he come,
Where saving his own sisters he had known
Scarce any but the women of his isles,
Rough wives, that laugh'd and scream'd against the gulls,
Makers of nets, and living from the sea.

Then with a slow smile turn'd the lady round
And look'd upon her people; and, as when

A stone is flung into some sleeping tarn
The circle widens till it lip the marge,
Spread the slow smile thro' all her company.
Three knights were thereamong, and they too smiled,
Scorning him ; for the lady was Ettarre,
And she was a great lady in her land.

Again she said : 'O wild and of the woods,
Knowest thou not the fashion of our speech?
Or have the Heavens but given thee a fair face,
Lacking a tongue?'

'O damsel,' answer'd he,
'I woke from dreams, and coming out of gloom
Was dazzled by the sudden light, and crave
Pardon ; but will ye to Caerleon? I
Go likewise : shall I lead you to the King?'

'Lead then,' she said ; and thro' the woods they went.
And while they rode, the meaning in his eyes,
His tenderness of manner, and chaste awe,
His broken utterances and bashfulness,
Were all a burthen to her, and in her heart
She mutter'd, 'I have lighted on a fool,
Raw, yet so stale!' But since her mind was bent
On hearing, after trumpet blown, her name
And title, 'Queen of Beauty,' in the lists
Cried — and beholding him so strong she thought
That peradventure he will fight for me,
And win the circlet — therefore flatter'd him,
Being so gracious that he wellnigh deem'd
His wish by hers was echo'd ; and her knights
And all her damsels too were gracious to him,
For she was a great lady.

And when they reach'd
Caerleon, ere they past to lodging, she,
Taking his hand, 'O the strong hand,' she said,
'See! look at mine! but wilt thou fight for me,
And win me this fine circlet, Pelleas,
That I may love thee?'

Then his helpless heart
Leapt, and he cried, 'Ay! wilt thou if I win?'
'Ay, that will I,' she answer'd, and she laugh'd,
And straitly nipt the hand, and flung it from her;
Then glanced askew at those three knights of hers,
Till all her ladies laugh'd along with her.

'O happy world,' thought Pelleas, 'all, meseems,
Are happy; I the happiest of them all!'
Nor slept that night for pleasure in his blood,
And green wood-ways, and eyes among the leaves;
Then being on the morrow knighted, sware
To love one only. And as he came away,
The men who met him rounded on their heels
And wonder'd after him, because his face
Shone like the countenance of a priest of old
Against the flame about a sacrifice
Kindled by fire from heaven: so glad was he.

Then Arthur made vast banquets, and strange knights
From the four winds came in: and each one sat,
Tho' served with choice from air, land, stream, and sea,
Oft in mid-banquet measuring with his eyes
His neighbor's make and might; and Pelleas look'd
Noble among the noble, for he dream'd
His lady loved him, and he knew himself
Loved of the King: and him his new-made knight

Worshipt, whose lightest whisper moved him more
Than all the ranged reasons of the world.

Then blush'd and brake the morning of the jousts,
And this was call'd 'The Tournament of Youth;'
For Arthur, loving his young knight, withheld
His older and his mightier from the lists,
That Pelleas might obtain his lady's love,
According to her promise, and remain
Lord of the tourney. And Arthur had the jousts
Down in the flat field by the shore of Usk
Holden; the gilded parapets were crown'd
With faces, and the great tower fill'd with eyes
Up to the summit, and the trumpets blew.
There all day long Sir Pelleas kept the field
With honor; so by that strong hand of his
The sword and golden circlet were achieved.

Then rang the shout his lady loved: the heat
Of pride and glory fired her face, her eye
Sparkled; she caught the circlet from his lance,
And there before the people crown'd herself:
So for the last time she was gracious to him.

Then at Caerleon for a space — her look
Bright for all others, cloudier on her knight —
Linger'd Ettarre; and, seeing Pelleas droop,
Said Guinevere, 'We marvel at thee much,
O damsel, wearing this unsunny face
To him who won thee glory!' And she said,
'Had ye not held your Lancelot in your bower.
My Queen, he had not won.' Whereat the Queen,
As one whose foot is bitten by an ant,
Glanced down upon her, turn'd and went her way.

But after, when her damsels, and herself,
And those three knights all set their faces home,
Sir Pelleas follow'd. She that saw him cried:
'Damsels — and yet I should be shamed to say it —
I cannot bide Sir Baby. Keep him back
Among yourselves. Would rather that we had
Some rough old knight who knew the worldly way,
Albeit grizzlier than a bear, to ride
And jest with! Take him to you, keep him off,
And pamper him with papmeat, if ye will,
Old milky fables of the wolf and sheep,
Such as the wholesome mothers tell their boys.
Nay, should ye try him with a merry one
To find his mettle, good; and if he fly us,
Small matter! let him.' This her damsels heard,
And, mindful of her small and cruel hand,
They, closing round him thro' the journey home,
Acted her hest, and always from her side
Restrain'd him with all manner of device,
So that he could not come to speech with her.
And when she gain'd her castle, upsprang the bridge,
Down rang the grate of iron thro' the groove,
And he was left alone in open field.

'These be the ways of ladies,' Pelleas thought,
'To those who love them, trials of our faith.
Yea, let her prove me to the uttermost,
For loyal to the uttermost am I.'
So made his moan, and, darkness falling, sought
A priory not far off, there lodged, but rose
With morning every day, and, moist or dry,
Full-arm'd upon his charger all day long
Sat by the walls, and no one open'd to him.

And this persistence turn'd her scorn to wrath.
Then, calling her three knights, she charged them, 'Out!
And drive him from the walls.' And out they came,
But Pelleas overthrew them as they dash'd
Against him one by one; and these return'd,
But still he kept his watch beneath the wall.

Thereon her wrath became a hate; and once,
A week beyond, while walking on the walls
With her three knights, she pointed downward, 'Look,
He haunts me — I cannot breathe — besieges me!
Down! strike him! put my hate into your strokes,
And drive him from my walls.' And down they went,
And Pelleas overthrew them one by one;
And from the tower above him cried Ettarre,
'Bind him, and bring him in.'
He heard her voice;
Then let the strong hand, which had overthrown
Her minion-knights, by those he overthrew
Be bounden straight, and so they brought him in.

Then when he came before Ettarre, the sight
Of her rich beauty made him at one glance
More bondsman in his heart than in his bonds.
Yet with good cheer he spake: 'Behold me, lady,
A prisoner, and the vassal of thy will;
And if thou keep me in thy donjon here,
Content am I so that I see thy face
But once a day: for I have sworn my vows,
And thou hast given thy promise, and I know
That all these pains are trials of my faith,
And that thyself, when thou hast seen me strain'd
And sifted to the utmost, wilt at length
Yield me thy love and know me for thy knight.'

Then she began to rail so bitterly,
With all her damsels, he was stricken mute,
But, when she mock'd his vows and the great King,
Lighted on words: 'For pity of thine own self,
Peace, lady, peace: is he not thine and mine?'
'Thou fool,' she said, 'I never heard his voice
But long'd to break away. Unbind him now,
And thrust him out of doors; for save he be
Fool to the midmost marrow of his bones,
He will return no more.' And those, her three,
Laugh'd, and unbound, and thrust him from the gate.

And after this, a week beyond, again
She call'd them, saying: 'There he watches yet,
There like a dog before his master's door!
Kick'd, he returns: do ye not hate him, ye?
Ye know yourselves: how can ye bide at peace,
Affronted with his fulsome innocence?
Are ye but creatures of the board and bed,
No men to strike? Fall on him all at once,
And if ye slay him I reck not; if ye fail,
Give ye the slave mine order to be bound,
Bind him as heretofore, and bring him in:
It may be ye shall slay him in his bonds.'

She spake, and at her will they couch'd their spears,
Three against one: and Gawain passing by,
Bound upon solitary adventure, saw
Low down beneath the shadow of those towers
A villainy, three to one; and thro' his heart
The fire of honor and all noble deeds
Flash'd, and he call'd, 'I strike upon thy side —
The caitiffs!' 'Nay,' said Pelleas, 'but forbear;
He needs no aid who doth his lady's will.'

So Gawain, looking at the villainy done,
Forbore, but in his heat and eagerness
Trembled and quiver'd, as the dog, withheld
A moment from the vermin that he sees
Before him, shivers ere he springs and kills.

And Pelleas overthrew them, one to three;
And they rose up, and bound, and brought him in.
Then first her anger, leaving Pelleas, burn'd
Full on her knights in many an evil name
Of craven, weakling, and thrice-beaten hound:
'Yet, take him, ye that scarce are fit to touch,
Far less to bind, your victor, and thrust him out,
And let who will release him from his bonds.
And if he comes again'—there she brake short;
And Pelleas answer'd: 'Lady, for indeed
I loved you and I deem'd you beautiful,
I cannot brook to see your beauty marr'd
Thro' evil spite; and if ye love me not,
I cannot bear to dream you so forsworn.
I had liefer ye were worthy of my love
Than to be loved again of you—farewell;
And tho' ye kill my hope, not yet my love,
Vex not yourself: ye will not see me more.'

While thus he spake, she gazed upon the man
Of princely bearing, tho' in bonds, and thought:
'Why have I push'd him from me? this man loves,
If love there be; yet him I loved not. Why?
I deem'd him fool? yea, so? or that in him
A something—was it nobler than myself?—
Seem'd my reproach? He is not of my kind.
He could not love me, did he know me well.
Nay, let him go—and quickly.' And her knights
Laugh'd not, but thrust him bounden out of door.

Forth sprang Gawain, and loosed him from his bonds,
And flung them o'er the walls; and afterward,
Shaking his hands, as from a lazar's rag,
'Faith of my body,' he said, 'and art thou not—
Yea thou art he, whom late our Arthur made
Knight of his table; yea, and he that won
The circlet? wherefore hast thou so defamed
Thy brotherhood in me and all the rest
As let these caitiffs on thee work their will?'

And Pelleas answer'd: 'O, their wills are hers
For whom I won the circlet; and mine, hers,
Thus to be bounden, so to see her face,
Marr'd tho' it be with spite and mockery now,
Other than when I found her in the woods;
And tho' she hath me bounden but in spite,
And all to flout me, when they bring me in,
Let me be bounden, I shall see her face;
Else must I die thro' mine unhappiness.'

And Gawain answer'd kindly tho' in scorn:
'Why, let my lady bind me if she will,
And let my lady beat me if she will;
But an she send her delegate to thrall
These fighting hands of mine — Christ kill me then
But I will slice him handless by the wrist,
And let my lady sear the stump for him,
Howl as he may! But hold me for your friend:
Come, ye know nothing; here I pledge my troth,
Yea, by the honor of the Table Round,
I will be leal to thee and work thy work,
And tame thy jailing princess to thine hand.
Lend me thine horse and arms, and I will say
That I have slain thee. She will let me in

To hear the manner of thy fight and fall;
Then, when I come within her counsels, then
From prime to vespers will I chant thy praise
As prowest knight and truest lover, more
Than any have sung thee living, till she long
To have thee back in lusty life again,
Not to be bound, save by white bonds and warm,
Dearer than freedom. Wherefore now thy horse
And armor; let me go; be comforted:
Give me three days to melt her fancy, and hope
The third night hence will bring thee news of gold.'

Then Pelleas lent his horse and all his arms,
Saving the goodly sword, his prize, and took
Gawain's, and said, 'Betray me not, but help —
Art thou not he whom men call light-of-love?'

'Ay,' said Gawain, 'for women be so light;'
Then bounded forward to the castle walls,
And raised a bugle hanging from his neck,
And winded it, and that so musically
That all the old echoes hidden in the wall
Rang out like hollow woods at hunting-tide.

Up ran a score of damsels to the tower;
'Avaunt,' they cried, 'our lady loves thee not!'
But Gawain lifting up his vizor said:
'Gawain am I, Gawain of Arthur's court,
And I have slain this Pelleas whom ye hate:
Behold his horse and armor. Open gates,
And I will make you merry.'

And down they ran,
Her damsels, crying to their lady, 'Lo!

Pelleas is dead — he told us — he that hath
His horse and armor: will ye let him in?
He slew him! Gawain, Gawain of the court,
Sir Gawain — there he waits below the wall,
Blowing his bugle as who should say him nay.'

And so, leave given, straight on thro' open door
Rode Gawain, whom she greeted courteously.
'Dead, is it so?' she ask'd. 'Ay, ay,' said he,
'And oft in dying cried upon your name.'
'Pity on him,' she answer'd, 'a good knight,
But never let me bide one hour at peace.'
'Ay,' thought Gawain, 'and you be fair enow;
But I to your dead man have given my troth,
That whom ye loathe, him will I make you love.'

So those three days, aimless about the land,
Lost in a doubt, Pelleas wandering
Waited, until the third night brought a moon
With promise of large light on woods and ways.

Hot was the night and silent; but a sound
Of Gawain ever coming, and this lay —
Which Pelleas had heard sung before the Queen,
And seen her sadden listening — vext his heart,
And marr'd his rest — 'A worm within the rose.'

'A rose, but one, none other rose had I,
A rose, one rose, and this was wondrous fair,
One rose, a rose that gladden'd earth and sky,
One rose, my rose, that sweeten'd all mine air —
I cared not for the thorns; the thorns were there.

'One rose, a rose to gather by and by,
One rose, a rose, to gather and to wear,

No rose but one — what other rose had I?
One rose, my rose; a rose that will not die, —
He dies who loves it, — if the worm be there.'

This tender rhyme, and evermore the doubt,
'Why lingers Gawain with his golden news?'
So shook him that he could not rest, but rode
Ere midnight to her walls, and bound his horse
Hard by the gates. Wide open were the gates,
And no watch kept; and in thro' these he past,
And heard but his own steps, and his own heart
Beating, for nothing moved but his own self
And his own shadow. Then he crost the court,
And spied not any light in hall or bower,
But saw the postern portal also wide
Yawning; and up a slope of garden, all
Of roses white and red, and brambles mixt
And overgrowing them, went on, and found,
Here too, all hush'd below the mellow moon,
Save that one rivulet from a tiny cave
Came lightening downward, and so spilt itself
Among the roses and was lost again.

Then was he ware of three pavilions rear'd
Above the bushes, gilden-peakt: in one,
Red after revel, droned her lurdane knights
Slumbering, and their three squires across their feet;
In one, their malice on the placid lip
Frozen by sweet sleep, four of her damsels lay;
And in the third, the circlet of the jousts
Bound on her brow, were Gawain and Ettarre.

Back, as a hand that pushes thro' the leaf
To find a nest and feels a snake, he drew;

Back, as a coward slinks from what he fears
To cope with, or a traitor proven, or hound
Beaten, did Pelleas in an utter shame
Creep with his shadow thro' the court again,
Fingering at his sword-handle until he stood
There on the castle-bridge once more, and thought,
'I will go back, and slay them where they lie.'

And so went back, and seeing them yet in sleep
Said, 'Ye, that so dishallow the holy sleep,
Your sleep is death,' and drew the sword, and thought,
'What! slay a sleeping knight? the King hath bound
And sworn me to this brotherhood;' again,
'Alas that ever a knight should be so false.'
Then turn'd, and so return'd, and groaning laid
The naked sword athwart their naked throats,
There left it, and them sleeping; and she lay,
The circlet of the tourney round her brows,
And the sword of the tourney across her throat.

And forth he past, and mounting on his horse
Stared at her towers that, larger than themselves
In their own darkness, throng'd into the moon.
Then crush'd the saddle with his thighs, and clench'd
His hands, and madden'd with himself and moan'd:

'Would they have risen against me in their blood
At the last day? I might have answer'd them
Even before high God. O towers so strong,
Huge, solid, would that even while I gaze
The crack of earthquake shivering to your base
Split you, and hell burst up your harlot roofs
Bellowing, and charr'd you thro' and thro' within,
Black as the harlot's heart — hollow as a skull!

Let the fierce east scream thro' your eyelet-holes,
And whirl the dust of harlots round and round
In dung and nettles! hiss, snake — I saw him there —
Let the fox bark, let the wolf yell! Who yells
Here in the still sweet summer night but I —
I, the poor Pelleas whom she call'd her fool?
Fool, beast — he, she, or I? myself most fool;
Beast too, as lacking human wit — disgraced,
Dishonor'd all for trial of true love —
Love? — we be all alike: only the King
Hath made us fools and liars. O noble vows!
O great and sane and simple race of brutes
That own no lust because they have no law!
For why should I have loved her to my shame?
I loathe her, as I loved her to my shame.
I never loved her, I but lusted for her —
Away!' —

He dash'd the rowel into his horse,
And bounded forth and vanish'd thro' the night.

Then she, that felt the cold touch on her throat,
Awaking knew the sword, and turn'd herself
To Gawain: 'Liar, for thou hast not slain
This Pelleas! here he stood, and might have slain
Me and thyself.' And he that tells the tale
Says that her ever-veering fancy turn'd
To Pelleas, as the one true knight on earth
And only lover; and thro' her love her life
Wasted and pined, desiring him in vain.

But he by wild and way, for half the night,
And over hard and soft, striking the sod
From out the soft, the spark from off the hard,

Rode till the star above the wakening sun,
Beside that tower where Percivale was cowl'd,
Glanced from the rosy forehead of the dawn.
For so the words were flash'd into his heart
He knew not whence or wherefore: 'O sweet star,
Pure on the virgin forehead of the dawn!'
And there he would have wept, but felt his eyes
Harder and drier than a fountain bed
In summer: thither came the village girls
And linger'd talking, and they come no more
Till the sweet heavens have fill'd it from the height:
Again with living waters in the change
Of seasons: hard his eyes, harder his heart
Seem'd; but so weary were his limbs that he,
Gasping, 'Of Arthur's hall am I, but here,
Here let me rest and die,' cast himself down,
And gulf'd his griefs in inmost sleep; so lay,
Till shaken by a dream, that Gawain fired
The hall of Merlin, and the morning star
Reel'd in the smoke, brake into flame, and fell.

He woke, and being ware of some one nigh,
Sent hands upon him, as to tear him, crying,
'False! and I held thee pure as Guinevere.'

But Percivale stood near him and replied,
'Am I but false as Guinevere is pure?
Or art thou mazed with dreams? or being one
Of our free-spoken Table hast not heard
That Lancelot'—there he check'd himself and paused

Then fared it with Sir Pelleas as with one
Who gets a wound in battle, and the sword
That made it plunges thro' the wound again,

And pricks it deeper; and he shrank and wail'd,
'Is the Queen false?' and Percivale was mute.
'Have any of our Round Table held their vows?'
And Percivale made answer not a word.
'Is the King true?' 'The King!' said Percivale.
'Why, then let men couple at once with wolves.
What! art thou mad?'

But Pelleas, leaping up,
Ran thro' the doors and vaulted on his horse
And fled: small pity upon his horse had he,
Or on himself, or any, and when he met
A cripple, one that held a hand for alms—
Hunch'd as he was, and like an old dwarf-elm
That turns its back on the salt blast, the boy
Paused not, but overrode him, shouting, 'False,
And false with Gawain!' and so left him bruised
And batter'd, and fled on, and hill and wood
Went ever streaming by him till the gloom
That follows on the turning of the world
Darken'd the common path: he twitch'd the reins,
And made his beast, that better knew it, swerve
Now off it and now on; but when he saw
High up in heaven the hall that Merlin built,
Blackening against the dead-green stripes of even,
'Black nest of rats,' he groan'd, 'ye build too high.'

Not long thereafter from the city gates
Issued Sir Lancelot riding airily,
Warm with a gracious parting from the Queen,
Peace at his heart, and gazing at a star
And marvelling what it was; on whom the boy,
Across the silent seeded meadow-grass
Borne, clash'd: and Lancelot, saying, 'What name hast thou

That ridest here so blindly and so hard?'
'No name, no name,' he shouted, 'a scourge am I
To lash the treasons of the Table Round.'
'Yea, but thy name?' 'I have many names,' he cried:
'I am wrath and shame and hate and evil fame,
And like a poisonous wind I pass to blast
And blaze the crime of Lancelot and the Queen.'
'First over me,' said Lancelot, 'shalt thou pass.'
'Fight therefore,' yell'd the youth, and either knight 56a
Drew back a space, and when they closed, at once
The weary steed of Pelleas floundering flung
His rider, who call'd out from the dark field,
'Thou art false as hell: slay me; I have no sword.'
Then Lancelot, 'Yea, between thy lips — and sharp;
But here will I disedge it by thy death.'
'Slay then,' he shriek'd, 'my will is to be slain,'
And Lancelot, with his heel upon the fallen,
Rolling his eyes, a moment stood, then spake:
'Rise, weakling; I am Lancelot; say thy say.' 57a

And Lancelot slowly rode his war-horse back
To Camelot, and Sir Pelleas in brief while
Caught his unbroken limbs from the dark field,
And follow'd to the city. It chanced that both
Brake into hall together, worn and pale.
There with her knights and dames was Guinevere.
Full wonderingly she gazed on Lancelot
So soon return'd, and then on Pelleas, him
Who had not greeted her, but cast himself
Down on a bench, hard-breathing. 'Have ye fought?' 58a
She ask'd of Lancelot. 'Ay, my Queen,' he said.
'And thou hast overthrown him?' 'Ay, my Queen.'
Then she, turning to Pelleas, 'O young knight,
Hath the great heart of knighthood in thee fail'd

So far thou canst not bide, unfrowardly,
A fall from *him?*' Then, for he answer'd not,
'Or hast thou other griefs? If I, the Queen,
May help them, loose thy tongue, and let me know.'
But Pelleas lifted up an eye so fierce
She quail'd; and he, hissing 'I have no sword,'
Sprang from the door into the dark. The Queen
Look'd hard upon her lover, he on her,
And each foresaw the dolorous day to be;
And all talk died, as in a grove all song
Beneath the shadow of some bird of prey:
Then a long silence came upon the hall,
And Modred thought, 'The time is hard at hand.'

THE LAST TOURNAMENT.

Dagonet, the fool, whom Gawain in his mood
Had made mock-knight of Arthur's Table Round,
At Camelot, high above the yellowing woods,
Danced like a wither'd leaf before the hall.
And toward him from the hall, with harp in hand,
And from the crown thereof a carcanet
Of ruby swaying to and fro, the prize
Of Tristram in the jousts of yesterday,
Came Tristram, saying, 'Why skip ye so, Sir Fool?'

For Arthur and Sir Lancelot riding once
Far down beneath a winding wall of rock
Heard a child wail. A stump of oak half-dead,
From roots like some black coil of carven snakes,
Clutch'd at the crag, and started thro' mid air
Bearing an eagle's nest; and thro' the tree
Rush'd ever a rainy wind, and thro' the wind
Pierced ever a child's cry: and crag and tree
Scaling, Sir Lancelot from the perilous nest,
This ruby necklace thrice around her neck,
And all unscarr'd from beak or talon, brought
A maiden babe, which Arthur pitying took,
Then gave it to his Queen to rear. The Queen,
But coldly acquiescing, in her white arms
Received, and after loved it tenderly,
And named it Nestling; so forgot herself

A moment, and her cares ; till that young life
Being smitten in mid heaven with mortal cold
Past from her, and in time the carcanet
Vext her with plaintive memories of the child :
So she, delivering it to Arthur, said,
'Take thou the jewels of this dead innocence,
And make them, an thou wilt, a tourney-prize.'

To whom the King, 'Peace to thine eagle-borne
Dead nestling, and this honor after death,
Following thy will ! but, O my Queen, I muse
Why ye not wear on arm, or neck, or zone
Those diamonds that I rescued from the tarn,
And Lancelot won, methought, for thee to wear.'

'Would rather you had let them fall,' she cried,
'Plunge and be lost — ill-fated as they were,
A bitterness to me ! — ye look amazed,
Not knowing they were lost as soon as given —
Slid from my hands when I was leaning out
Above the river — that unhappy child
Past in her barge ; but rosier luck will go
With these rich jewels, seeing that they came
Not from the skeleton of a brother-slayer,
But the sweet body of a maiden babe.
Perchance — who knows ? — the purest of thy knights
May win them for the purest of my maids.'

She ended, and the cry of a great jousts
With trumpet-blowings ran on all the ways
From Camelot in among the faded fields
To furthest towers ; and everywhere the knights
Arm'd for a day of glory before the King.

But on the hither side of that loud morn
Into the hall stagger'd, his visage ribb'd
From ear to ear with dogwhip-weals, his nose
Bridge-broken, one eye out, and one hand off,
And one with shatter'd fingers dangling lame,
A churl, to whom indignantly the King:

'My churl, for whom Christ died, what evil beast
Hath drawn his claws athwart thy face? or fiend?
Man was it who marr'd heaven's image in thee thus?'

Then, sputtering thro' the hedge of splinter'd teeth,
Yet strangers to the tongue, and with blunt stump
Pitch-blacken'd sawing the air, said the maim'd churl:

'He took them and he drave them to his tower —
Some hold he was a table-knight of thine —
A hundred goodly ones — the Red Knight, he —
Lord, I was tending swine, and the Red Knight
Brake in upon me and drave them to his tower;
And when I call'd upon thy name as one
That doest right by gentle and by churl,
Maim'd me and maul'd, and would outright have slain,
Save that he sware me to a message, saying:
"Tell thou the King and all his liars that I
Have founded my Round Table in the North,
And whatsoever his own knights have sworn
My knights have sworn the counter to it — and say
My tower is full of harlots, like his court,
But mine are worthier, seeing they profess
To be none other than themselves — and say
My knights are all adulterers like his own,
But mine are truer, seeing they profess
To be none other; and say his hour is come,

The heathen are upon him, his long lance
Broken, and his Excalibur a straw."'

Then Arthur turn'd to Kay the seneschal:
'Take thou my churl, and tend him curiously
Like a king's heir, till all his hurts be whole.
The heathen — but that ever-climbing wave,
Hurl'd back again so often in empty foam,
Hath lain for years at rest — and renegades,
Thieves, bandits, leavings of confusion, whom
The wholesome realm is purged of otherwhere,
Friends, thro' your manhood and your fealty, — now
Make their last head like Satan in the North.
My younger knights, new-made, in whom your flower
Waits to be solid fruit of golden deeds,
Move with me toward their quelling, which achieved,
The loneliest ways are safe from shore to shore.
But thou, Sir Lancelot, sitting in my place
Enchair'd to-morrow, arbitrate the field;
For wherefore shouldst thou care to mingle with it,
Only to yield my Queen her own again?
Speak, Lancelot, thou art silent: is it well?'

Thereto Sir Lancelot answer'd: 'It is well;
Yet better if the King abide, and leave
The leading of his younger knights to me.
Else, for the King has will'd it, it is well.'

Then Arthur rose and Lancelot follow'd him,
And while they stood without the doors, the King
Turn'd to him saying: 'Is it then so well?
Or mine the blame that oft I seem as he
Of whom was written, "A sound is in his ears"?
The foot that loiters, bidden go, — the glance

That only seems half-loyal to command, —
A manner somewhat fallen from reverence —
Or have I dream'd the bearing of our knights
Tells of a manhood ever less and lower?
Or whence the fear lest this my realm, uprear'd,
By noble deeds at one with noble vows,
From flat confusion and brute violences,
Reel back into the beast, and be no more?'

He spoke, and taking all his younger knights,
Down the slope city rode, and sharply turn'd
North by the gate. In her high bower the Queen,
Working a tapestry, lifted up her head,
Watch'd her lord pass, and knew not that she sigh'd.
Then ran across her memory the strange rhyme
Of bygone Merlin, 'Where is he who knows?
From the great deep to the great deep he goes.'

But when the morning of a tournament,
By these in earnest those in mockery call'd
The Tournament of the Dead Innocence,
Brake with a wet wind blowing, Lancelot,
Round whose sick head all night, like birds of prey,
The words of Arthur flying shriek'd, arose,
And down a streetway hung with folds of pure
White samite, and by fountains running wine,
Where children sat in white with cups of gold,
Moved to the lists, and there, with slow sad steps
Ascending, fill'd his double-dragon'd chair.

He glanced and saw the stately galleries,
Dame, damsel, each thro' worship of their Queen
White-robed in honor of the stainless child,
And some with scatter'd jewels, like a bank

Of maiden snow mingled with sparks of fire.
He look'd but once, and vail'd his eyes again.

The sudden trumpet sounded as in a dream
To ears but half-awaked, then one low roll
Of autumn thunder, and the jousts began;
And ever the wind blew, and yellowing leaf,
And gloom and gleam, and shower and shorn plume
Went down it. Sighing wearied'y, as one
Who sits and gazes on a faded fire,
When all the goodlier guests are past away,
Sat their great umpire looking o'er the lists.
He saw the laws that ruled the tournament
Broken, but spake not; once, a knight cast down
Before his throne of arbitration cursed
The dead babe and the follies of the King;
And once the laces of a helmet crack'd,
And show'd him, like a vermin in its hole,
Modred, a narrow face: anon he heard
The voice that billow'd round the barriers roar
An ocean-sounding welcome to one knight,
But newly-enter'd, taller than the rest,
And armor'd all in forest green, whereon
There tript a hundred tiny silver deer,
And wearing but a holly-spray for crest,
With ever-scattering berries, and on shield
A spear, a harp, a bugle — Tristram — late
From over-seas in Brittany return'd,
And marriage with a princess of that realm,
Isolt the White — Sir Tristram of the Woods —
Whom Lancelot knew, had held sometime with pain
His own against him, and now yearn'd to shake
The burthen off his heart in one full shock
With Tristram even to death. His strong hands gript

And dinted the gilt dragons right and left,
Until he groan'd for wrath — so many of those
That ware their ladies' colors on the casque
Drew from before Sir Tristram to the bounds,
And there with gibes and flickering mockeries
Stood, while he mutter'd, 'Craven crests! O shame!
What faith have these in whom they sware to love?
The glory of our Round Table is no more.'

So Tristram won, and Lancelot gave, the gems,
Not speaking other word than, 'Hast thou won?
Art thou the purest, brother? See, the hand
Wherewith thou takest this is red!' to whom
Tristram, half plagued by Lancelot's languorous mood,
Made answer: 'Ay, but wherefore toss me this
Like a dry bone cast to some hungry hound?
Let be thy fair Queen's fantasy. Strength of heart
And might of limb, but mainly use and skill,
Are winners in this pastime of our King.
My hand — belike the lance hath dript upon it —
No blood of mine, I trow; but O chief knight,
Right arm of Arthur in the battle-field,
Great brother, thou nor I have made the world;
Be happy in thy fair Queen as I in mine.'

And Tristram round the gallery made his horse
Caracole; then bow'd his homage, bluntly saying,
'Fair damsels, each to him who worships each
Sole Queen of Beauty and of love, behold
This day my Queen of Beauty is not here.'
And most of these were mute, some anger'd, one
Murmuring, 'All courtesy is dead,' and one,
'The glory of our Round Table is no more.'

Then fell thick rain, plume droopt and mantle clung,
And pettish cries awoke, and the wan day
Went glooming down in wet and weariness;
But under her black brows a swarthy one
Laugh'd shrilly, crying: 'Praise the patient saints,
Our one white day of Innocence hath past,
Tho' somewhat draggled at the skirt. So be it.
The snowdrop only, flowering thro' the year,
Would make the world as blank as winter-tide.
Come — let us gladden their sad eyes, our Queen's
And Lancelot's, at this night's solemnity
With all the kindlier colors of the field.'

So dame and damsel glitter'd at the feast
Variously gay; for he that tells the tale
Liken'd them, saying, as when an hour of cold
Falls on the mountain in midsummer snows,
And all the purple slopes of mountain flowers
Pass under white, till the warm hour returns
With veer of wind and all are flowers again,
So dame and damsel cast the simple white,
And glowing in all colors, the live grass,
Rose-campion, bluebell, kingcup, poppy, glanced
About the revels, and with mirth so loud
Beyond all use, that, half-amazed, the Queen,
And wroth at Tristram and the lawless jousts,
Brake up their sports, then slowly to her bower
Parted, and in her bosom pain was lord.

And little Dagonet on the morrow morn,
High over all the yellowing autumn-tide,
Danced like a wither'd leaf before the hall.
Then Tristram saying, 'Why skip ye so, Sir Fool?'
Wheel'd round on either heel, Dagonet replied,

'Belike for lack of wiser company ;
Or being fool, and seeing too much wit
Makes the world rotten, why, belike I skip
To know myself the wisest knight of all.'
'Ay, fool,' said Tristram, 'but 't is eating dry
To dance without a catch, a roundelay
To dance to.' Then he twangled on his harp,
And while he twangled little Dagonet stood
Quiet as any water-sodden log
Stay'd in the wandering warble of a brook,
But when the twangling ended, skipt again ;
And being ask'd, 'Why skipt ye not, Sir Fool?'
Made answer, 'I had liefer twenty years
Skip to the broken music of my brains
Than any broken music thou canst make.'
Then Tristram, waiting for the quip to come,
'Good now, what music have I broken, fool?'
And little Dagonet, skipping. 'Arthur, the King's ;
For when thou playest that air with Queen Isolt,
Thou makest broken music with thy bride,
Her daintier namesake down in Brittany —
And so thou breakest Arthur's music too.'
'Save for that broken music in thy brains,
Sir Fool,' said Tristram, 'I would break thy head.
Fool, I came late, the heathen wars were o'er,
The life had flown, we sware but by the shell —
I am but a fool to reason with a fool —
Come, thou art crabb'd and sour ; but lean me down,
Sir Dagonet, one of thy long asses' ears,
And harken if my music be not true.

'"Free love — free field — we love but while we may :
The woods are hush'd, their music is no more ;
The leaf is dead, the yearning past away.

New leaf, new life — the days of frost are o'er;
New life, new love, to suit the newer day;
New loves are sweet as those that went before:
Free love — free field — we love but while we may."

'Ye might have moved slow-measure to my tune,
Not stood stock-still. I made it in the woods,
And heard it ring as true as tested gold.'

But Dagonet with one foot poised in his hand:
'Friend, did ye mark that fountain yesterday,
Made to run wine? — but this had run itself
All out like a long life to a sour end —
And them that round it sat with golden cups
To hand the wine to whosoever came —
The twelve small damosels white as Innocence,
In honor of poor Innocence the babe,
Who left the gems which Innocence the Queen
Lent to the King, and Innocence the King
Gave for a prize — and one of those white slips
Handed her cup and piped, the pretty one,
"Drink, drink, Sir Fool," and thereupon I drank,
Spat — pish — the cup was gold, the draught was mud.'

And Tristram: 'Was it muddier than thy gibes?
Is all the laughter gone dead out of thee? —
Not marking how the knighthood mock thee, fool —
"Fear God: honor the King — his one true knight —
Sole follower of the vows" — for here be they
Who knew thee swine enow before I came,
Smuttier than blasted grain: but when the King
Had made thee fool, thy vanity so shot up
It frighted all free fool from out thy heart;
Which left thee less than fool, and less than swine,

A naked aught — yet swine I hold thee still,
For I have flung thee pearls and find thee swine.'

And little Dagonet mincing with his feet:
'Knight, an ye fling those rubies round my neck
In lieu of hers, I 'll hold thou hast some touch
Of music, since I care not for thy pearls.
Swine? I have wallow'd, I have wash'd — the world
Is flesh and shadow — I have had my day.
The dirty nurse, Experience, in her kind
Hath foul'd me — an I wallow'd, then I wash'd —
I have had my day and my philosophies —
And thank the Lord I am King Arthur's fool.
Swine, say ye? swine, goats, asses, rams, and geese
Troop'd round a Paynim harper once, who thrumm'd
On such a wire as musically as thou
Some such fine song — but never a king's fool.'

And Tristram, 'Then were swine, goats, asses, geese
The wiser fools, seeing thy Paynim bard
Had such a mastery of his mystery
That he could harp his wife up out of hell.'

Then Dagonet, turning on the ball of his foot,
'And whither harp'st thou thine? down! and thyself
Down! and two more: a helpful harper thou,
That harpest downward! Dost thou know the star
We call the Harp of Arthur up in heaven?'

And Tristram, 'Ay, Sir Fool, for when our King
Was victor wellnigh day by day, the knights,
Glorying in each new glory, set his name
High on all hills and in the signs of heaven.'

And Dagonet answer'd: 'Ay, and when the land
Was freed, and the Queen false, ye set yourself
To babble about him, all to show your wit —
And whether he were king by courtesy,
Or king by right — and so went harping down
The black king's highway, got so far and grew
So witty that ye play'd at ducks and drakes
With Arthur's vows on the great lake of fire.
Tuwhoo! do ye see it? do ye see the star?'

'Nay, fool,' said Tristram, 'not in open day.'
And Dagonet: 'Nay, nor will: I see it and hear.
It makes a silent music up in heaven,
And I and Arthur and the angels hear,
And then we skip.' 'Lo, fool,' he said, 'ye talk
Fool's treason: is the King thy brother fool?'
Then little Dagonet clapt his hands and shrill'd:
'Ay, ay, my brother fool, the king of fools!
Conceits himself as God that he can make
Figs out of thistles, silk from bristles, milk
From burning spurge, honey from hornet-combs,
And men from beasts — Long live the king of fools!'

And down the city Dagonet danced away;
But thro' the slowly-mellowing avenues
And solitary passes of the wood
Rode Tristram toward Lyonnesse and the west.
Before him fled the face of Queen Isolt
With ruby-circled neck, but evermore
Past, as a rustle or twitter in the wood
Made dull his inner, keen his outer eye
For all that walk'd, or crept, or perch'd, or flew.
Anon the face, as, when a gust hath blown,
Unruffling waters re-collect the shape

Of one that in them sees himself, return'd;
But at the slot or fewmets of a deer,
Or even a fallen feather, vanish'd again.

So on for all that day from lawn to lawn
Thro' many a league-long bower he rode. At length
A lodge of intertwisted beechen-boughs,
Furze-cramm'd and bracken-rooft, the which himself
Built for a summer day with Queen Isolt
Against a shower, dark in the golden grove
Appearing, sent his fancy back to where
She lived a moon in that low lodge with him;
Till Mark her lord had past, the Cornish King,
With six or seven, when Tristram was away,
And snatch'd her thence, yet, dreading worse than shame
Her warrior Tristram, spake not any word,
But bode his hour, devising wretchedness.

And now that desert lodge to Tristram lookt
So sweet that, halting, in he past and sank
Down on a drift of foliage random-blown;
But could not rest for musing how to smooth
And sleek his marriage over to the queen.
Perchance in lone Tintagil far from all
The tonguesters of the court she had not heard.
But then what folly had sent him over-seas
After she left him lonely here? a name?
Was it the name of one in Brittany,
Isolt, the daughter of the king? 'Isolt
Of the White Hands' they call'd her: the sweet name
Allured him first, and then the maid herself,
Who served him well with those white hands of hers,
And loved him well, until himself had thought
He loved her also, wedded easily,

But left her all as easily, and return'd.
The black-blue Irish hair and Irish eyes
Had drawn him home — what marvel? then he laid
His brows upon the drifted leaf and dream'd.

'He seem'd to pace the strand of Brittany
Between Isolt of Britain and his bride,
And show'd them both the ruby-chain, and both
Began to struggle for it, till his queen
Grasp't it so hard that all her hand was red.
Then cried the Breton, 'Look, her hand is red!
These be no rubies, this is frozen blood,
And melts within her hand — her hand is hot
With ill desires, but this I gave thee, look,
Is all as cool and white as any flower.'
Follow'd a rush of eagle's wings, and then
A whimpering of the spirit of the child,
Because the twain had spoil'd her carcanet.

He dream'd; but Arthur with a hundred spears
Rode far, till o'er the illimitable reed,
And many a glancing plash and sallowy isle,
The wide-wing'd sunset of the misty marsh
Glared on a huge machicolated tower
That stood with open doors, whereout was roll'd
A roar of riot, as from men secure
Amid their marshes, ruffians at their ease
Among their harlot-brides, an evil song.
'Lo there,' said one of Arthur's youth, for there,
High on a grim dead tree before the tower,
A goodly brother of the Table Round
Swung by the neck: and on the boughs a shield
Showing a shower of blood in a field noir,
And therebeside a horn, inflamed the knights

At that dishonor done the gilded spur,
Till each would clash the shield and blow the horn.
But Arthur waved them back. Alone he rode.
Then at the dry harsh roar of the great horn,
That sent the face of all the marsh aloft
An ever upward-rushing storm and cloud
Of shriek and plume, the Red Knight heard, and all,
Even to tipmost lance and topmost helm,
In blood-red armor sallying, howl'd to the King:

'The teeth of Hell flay bare and gnash thee flat! —
Lo! art thou not that eunuch-hearted king
Who fain had clipt free manhood from the world —
The woman-worshipper? Yea, God's curse, and I!
Slain was the brother of my paramour
By a knight of thine, and I that heard her whine
And snivel, being eunuch-hearted too,
Sware by the scorpion-worm that twists in hell
And stings itself to everlasting death,
To hang whatever knight of thine I fought
And tumbled. Art thou king? — Look to thy life!'

He ended: Arthur knew the voice; the face
Wellnigh was helmet-hidden, and the name
Went wandering somewhere darkling in his mind.
And Arthur deign'd not use of word or sword,
But let the drunkard, as he stretch'd from horse
To strike him, overbalancing his bulk,
Down from the causeway heavily to the swamp
Fall, as the crest of some slow-arching wave,
Heard in dead night along that table-shore,
Drops flat, and after the great waters break
Whitening for half a league, and thin themselves,
Far over sands marbled with moon and cloud,

From less and less to nothing; thus he fell
Head-heavy; then the knights, who watch'd him, roar'd
And shouted and leapt down upon the fallen,
There trampled out his face from being known,
And sank his head in mire, and slimed themselves;
Nor heard the King for their own cries, but sprang
Thro' open doors, and swording right and left
Men, women, on their sodden faces, hurl'd
The tables over and the wines, and slew
Till all the rafters rang with woman-yells,
And all the pavement stream'd with massacre:
Then, echoing yell with yell, they fired the tower,
Which half that autumn night, like the live North,
Red-pulsing up thro' Alioth and Alcor,
Made all above it, and a hundred meres
About it, as the water Moab saw
Come round by the east, and out beyond them flush'd
The long low dune and lazy-plunging sea.

So all the ways were safe from shore to shore,
But in the heart of Arthur pain was lord.

Then, out of Tristram waking, the red dream
Fled with a shout, and that low lodge return'd,
Mid-forest, and the wind among the boughs.
He whistled his good war-horse left to graze
Among the forest greens, vaulted upon him,
And rode beneath an ever-showering leaf,
Till one lone woman, weeping near a cross,
Stay'd him. 'Why weep ye?' 'Lord,' she said, 'my man
Hath left me or is dead;' whereon he thought —
'What, if she hate me now? I would not this.
What, if she love me still? I would not that.
I know not what I would' — but said to her,

'Yet weep not thou, lest, if thy mate return,
He find thy favor changed and love thee not'—
Then pressing day by day thro' Lyonnesse
Last in a roky hollow, belling, heard
The hounds of Mark, and felt the goodly hounds
Yelp at his heart, but, turning, past and gain'd
Tintagil, half in sea and high on land,
A crown of towers.

Down in a casement sat,
A low sea-sunset glorying round her hair
And glossy-throated grace, Isolt the queen.
And when she heard the feet of Tristram grind
The spiring stone that scaled about her tower,
Flush'd, started, met him at the doors, and there
Belted his body with her white embrace,
Crying aloud: 'Not Mark — not Mark, my soul!
The footstep flutter'd me at first: not he!
Catlike thro' his own castle steals my Mark,
But warrior-wise thou stridest thro' his halls
Who hates thee, as I him — even to the death.
My soul, I felt my hatred for my Mark
Quicken within me, and knew that thou wert nigh.'
To whom Sir Tristram smiling, 'I am here:
Let be thy Mark, seeing he is not thine.'

And drawing somewhat backward she replied:
'Can he be wrong'd who is not even his own,
But save for dread of thee had beaten me,
Scratch'd, bitten, blinded, marr'd me somehow — Mark?
What rights are his that dare not strike for them?
Not lift a hand — not, tho' he found me thus!
But harken! have ye met him? hence he went
To-day for three days' hunting — as he said —

And so returns belike within an hour.
Mark's way, my soul! — but eat not thou with Mark,
Because he hates thee even more than fears,
Nor drink; and when thou passest any wood
Close vizor, lest an arrow from the bush
Should leave me all alone with Mark and hell.
My God, the measure of my hate for Mark
Is as the measure of my love for thee!'

So, pluck'd one way by hate and one by love,
Drain'd of her force, again she sat, and spake
To Tristram, as he knelt before her, saying:
'O hunter, and O blower of the horn,
Harper, and thou hast been a rover too,
For, ere I mated with my shambling king,
Ye twain had fallen out about the bride
Of one — his name is out of me — the prize,
If prize she were — what marvel? — she could see —
Thine, friend; and ever since my craven seeks
To wreck thee villainously: but, O Sir Knight,
What dame or damsel have ye kneel'd to last?'

And Tristram, 'Last to my Queen Paramount,
Here now to my queen paramount of love
And loveliness — ay, lovelier than when first
Her light feet fell on our rough Lyonnesse,
Sailing from Ireland.'

Softly laugh'd Isolt:
'Flatter me not, for hath not our great Queen
My dole of beauty trebled?' and he said:
'Her beauty is her beauty, and thine thine,
And thine is more to me — soft, gracious, kind —
Save when thy Mark is kindled on thy lips

Most gracious; but she, haughty, even to him,
Lancelot; for I have seen him wan enow
To make one doubt if ever the great Queen
Have yielded him her love.'

To whom Isolt:
'Ah, then, false hunter and false harper, thou
Who brakest thro' the scruple of my bond,
Calling me thy white hind, and saying to me
That Guinevere had sinn'd against the highest,
And I — misyoked with such a want of man —
That I could hardly sin against the lowest.'

He answer'd: 'O my soul, be comforted!
If this be sweet, to sin in leading-strings,
If here be comfort, and if ours be sin,
Crown'd warrant had we for the crowning sin
That made us happy; but how ye greet me — fear
And fault and doubt — no word of that fond tale —
Thy deep heart-yearnings, thy sweet memories
Of Tristram in that year he was away.'

And, saddening on the sudden, spake Isolt:
'I had forgotten all in my strong joy
To see thee — yearnings? — ay! for, hour by hour,
Here in the never-ended afternoon,
O, sweeter than all memories of thee,
Deeper than any yearnings after thee
Seem'd those far-rolling, westward-smiling seas,
Watch'd from this tower. Isolt of Britain dash'd
Before Isolt of Brittany on the strand,
Would that have chill'd her bride-kiss? Wedded her?
Fought in her father's battles? wounded there?
The King was all fulfill'd with gratefulness,

And she, my namesake of the hands, that heal'd
Thy hurt and heart with unguent and caress —
Well — can I wish her any huger wrong
Than having known thee? her too hast thou left
To pine and waste in those sweet memories.
O, were I not my Mark's, by whom all men
Are noble, I should hate thee more than love.'

And Tristram, fondling her light hands, replied:
'Grace, queen, for being loved: she loved me well.
Did I love her? the name at least I loved.
Isolt? — I fought his battles, for Isolt!
The night was dark; the true star set. Isolt!
The name was ruler of the dark — Isolt?
Care not for her! patient, and prayerful, meek,
Pale-blooded, she will yield herself to God.'

And Isolt answer'd: 'Yea, and why not I?
Mine is the larger need, who am not meek,
Pale-blooded, prayerful. Let me tell thee now.
Here one black, mute midsummer night I sat,
Lonely, but musing on thee, wondering where,
Murmuring a light song I had heard thee sing,
And once or twice I spake thy name aloud.
Then flash'd a levin-brand; and near me stood,
In fuming sulphur blue and green, a fiend —
Mark's way to steal behind one in the dark —
For there was Mark: "He has wedded her," he said,
Not said, but hiss'd it; then this crown of towers
So shook to such a roar of all the sky,
That here in utter dark I swoon'd away,
And woke again in utter dark, and cried,
"I will flee hence and give myself to God" —
And thou wert lying in thy new leman's arms.'

Then Tristram, ever dallying with her hand,
'May God be with thee, sweet, when old and gray,
And past desire!' a saying that anger'd her.
'"May God be with thee, sweet, when thou art old,
And sweet no more to me!" I need Him now.
For when had Lancelot utter'd aught so gross
Even to the swineherd's malkin in the mast?
The greater man the greater courtesy.
Far other was the Tristram, Arthur's knight!
But thou, thro' ever harrying thy wild beasts —
Save that to touch a harp, tilt with a lance
Becomes thee well — art grown wild beast thyself.
How darest thou, if lover, push me even
In fancy from thy side, and set me far
In the gray distance, half a life away,
Her to be loved no more? Unsay it, unswear!
Flatter me rather, seeing me so weak,
Broken with Mark and hate and solitude,
Thy marriage and mine own, that I should suck
Lies like sweet wines: lie to me; I believe.
Will ye not lie? not swear, as there ye kneel,
And solemnly as when ye sware to him,
The man of men, our King — My God, the power
Was once in vows when men believed the King!
They lied not then who sware, and thro' their vows
The King prevailing made his realm: — I say,
Swear to me thou wilt love me even when old,
Gray-hair'd, and past desire, and in despair.'

Then Tristram, pacing moodily up and down:
'Vows! did you keep the vow you made to Mark
More than I mine? Lied, say ye? Nay, but learnt,
The vow that binds too strictly snaps itself —
My knighthood taught me this — ay, being snapt —

We run more counter to the soul thereof
Than had we never sworn. I swear no more.
I swore to the great King, and am forsworn.
For once — even to the height — I honor'd him.
"Man, is he man at all?" methought, when first
I rode from our rough Lyonnesse, and beheld
That victor of the Pagan throned in hall —
His hair, a sun that ray'd from off a brow
Like hill-snow high in heaven, the steel-blue eyes,
The golden beard that clothed his lips with light —
Moreover, that weird legend of his birth,
With Merlin's mystic babble about his end
Amazed me; then, his foot was on a stool
Shaped as a dragon; he seem'd to me no man,
But Michael trampling Satan; so I sware,
Being amazed: but this went by — The vows!
O, ay — the wholesome madness of an hour —
They served their use, their time; for every knight
Believed himself a greater than himself,
And every follower eyed him as a God;
Till he, being lifted up beyond himself,
Did mightier deeds than elsewise he had done,
And so the realm was made: but then their vows —
First mainly thro' that sullying of our Queen —
Began to gall the knighthood, asking whence
Had Arthur right to bind them to himself?
Dropt down from heaven? wash'd up from out the deep?
They fail'd to trace him thro' the flesh and blood
Of our old kings: whence then? a doubtful lord
To bind them by inviolable vows,
Which flesh and blood perforce would violate:
For feel this arm of mine — the tide within
Red with free chase and heather-scented air,
Pulsing full man; can Arthur make me pure

As any maiden child? lock up my tongue
From uttering freely what I freely hear?
Bind me to one? The wide world laughs at it.
And worldling of the world am I, and know
The ptarmigan that whitens ere his hour
Woos his own end, we are not angels here
Nor shall be: vows — I am woodman of the woods,
And hear the garnet-headed yaffingale
Mock them: my soul, we love but while we may;
And therefore is my love so large for thee,
Seeing it is not bounded save by love.'

Here ending, he moved toward her, and she said:
'Good: an I turn'd away my love for thee
To some one thrice as courteous as thyself —
For courtesy wins woman all as well
As valor may, but he that closes both
Is perfect, he is Lancelot — taller indeed,
Rosier and comelier, thou — but say I loved
This knightliest of all knights, and cast thee back
Thine own small saw, "We love but while we may,"
Well then, what answer?'

He that while she spake,
Mindful of what he brought to adorn her with,
The jewels, had let one finger lightly touch
The warm white apple of her throat, replied,
'Press this a little closer, sweet, until —
Come, I am hunger'd and half-anger'd — meat,
Wine, wine — and I will love thee to the death,
And out beyond into the dream to come.'

So then, when both were brought to full accord,
She rose, and set before him all he will'd;

And after these had comforted the blood
With meats and wines, and satiated their hearts —
Now talking of their woodland paradise,
The deer, the dews, the fern, the founts, the lawns;
Now mocking at the much ungainliness,
And craven shifts, and long crane legs of Mark —
Then Tristram laughing caught the harp and sang:

'Ay, ay, O, ay — the winds that bend the brier!
A star in heaven, a star within the mere!
Ay, ay, O, ay — a star was my desire,
And one was far apart and one was near:
Ay, ay, O, ay — the winds that bow the grass!
And one was water and one star was fire,
And one will ever shine and one will pass.
Ay, ay, O, ay — the winds that move the mere!'

Then in the light's last glimmer Tristram show'd
And swung the ruby carcanet. She cried,
'The collar of some Order, which our King
Hath newly founded, all for thee, my soul,
For thee, to yield thee grace beyond thy peers.'

'Not so, my queen,' he said, 'but the red fruit
Grown on a magic oak-tree in mid-heaven,
And won by Tristram as a tourney-prize,
And hither brought by Tristram for his last
Love-offering and peace-offering unto thee.'

He spoke, he turn'd, then, flinging round her neck,
Claspt it, and cried, 'Thine Order, O my queen!'
But, while he bow'd to kiss the jewell'd throat,
Out of the dark, just as the lips had touch'd,

Behind him rose a shadow and a shriek —
'Mark's way,' said Mark, and clove him thro' the brain.

That night came Arthur home, and while he climb'd,
All in a death-dumb autumn-dripping gloom,
The stairway to the hall, and look'd and saw
The great Queen's bower was dark,— about his feet
A voice clung sobbing till he question'd it,
'What art thou?' and the voice about his feet
Sent up an answer, sobbing, 'I am thy fool,
And I shall never make thee smile again.'

GUINEVERE.

QUEEN GUINEVERE had fled the court, and sat
There in the holy house at Almesbury
Weeping, none with her save a little maid,
A novice: one low light betwixt them burn'd
Blurr'd by the creeping mist, for all abroad,
Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,
The white mist, like a face-cloth to the face,
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still.

For hither had she fled, her cause of flight
Sir Modred; he that like a subtle beast
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,
Ready to spring, waiting a chance: for this
He chill'd the popular praises of the King
With silent smiles of slow disparagement;
And tamper'd with the Lords of the White Horse,
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left; and sought
To make disruption in the Table Round
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds
Serving his traitorous end; and all his aims
Were sharpen'd by strong hate for Lancelot.

For thus it chanced one morn when all the court,
Green-suited, but with plumes that mock'd the may,
Had been — their wont — a-maying and return'd,
That Modred still in green, all ear and eye,
Climb'd to the high top of the garden-wall

To spy some secret scandal if he might,
And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her best
Enid and lissome Vivien, of her court
The wiliest and the worst; and more than this
He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by
Spied where he couch'd, and as the gardener's hand
Picks from the colewort a green caterpillar,
So from the high wall and the flowering grove
Of grasses Lancelot pluck'd him by the heel,
And cast him as a worm upon the way;
But when he knew the prince tho' marr'd with dust,
He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,
Made such excuses as he might, and these
Full knightly without scorn: for in those days
No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn;
But, if a man were halt, or hunch'd, in him
By those whom God had made full-limb'd and tall,
Scorn was allow'd as part of his defect,
And he was answer'd softly by the King
And all his Table. So Sir Lancelot holp
To raise the prince, who rising twice or thrice
Full sharply smote his knees, and smiled, and went:
But, ever after, the small violence done
Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,
As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long
A little bitter pool about a stone
On the bare coast.

But when Sir Lancelot told
This matter to the Queen, at first she laugh'd
Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,
Then shudder'd, as the village wife who cries,
'I shudder, some one steps across my grave;'
Then laugh'd again, but faintlier, for indeed

She half-foresaw that he, the subtle beast,
Would track her guilt until he found, and hers
Would be for evermore a name of scorn.
Henceforward rarely could she front in hall,
Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,
Heart-hiding smile, and gray persistent eye.
Henceforward too, the Powers that tend the soul,
To help it from the death that cannot die,
And save it even in extremes, began
To vex and plague her. Many a time for hours,
Beside the placid breathings of the King,
In the dead night, grim faces came and went
Before her, or a vague spiritual fear —
Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,
Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,
That keeps the rust of murder on the walls —
Held her awake: or if she slept she dream'd
An awful dream; for then she seem'd to stand
On some vast plain before a setting sun,
And from the sun there swiftly made at her
A ghastly something, and its shadow flew
Before it till it touch'd her, and she turn'd —
When lo! her own, that broadening from her feet,
And blackening, swallow'd all the land, and in it
Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke.
And all this trouble did not pass but grew,
Till even the clear face of the guileless King,
And trustful courtesies of household life,
Became her bane; and at the last she said,
'O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land,
For if thou tarry we shall meet again,
And if we meet again some evil chance
Will make the smouldering scandal break and blaze
Before the people and our lord the King.'

And Lancelot ever promised, but remain'd,
And still they met and met. Again she said,
'O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence.'
And then they were agreed upon a night —
When the good King should not be there — to meet
And part for ever. Vivien, lurking, heard.
She told Sir Modred. Passion-pale they met
And greeted. Hands in hands, and eye to eye,
Low on the border of her couch they sat
Stammering and staring. It was their last hour,
A madness of farewells. And Modred brought
His creatures to the basement of the tower
For testimony; and crying with full voice,
'Traitor, come out, ye are trapt at last,' aroused
Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike
Leapt on him, and hurl'd him headlong, and he fell
Stunn'd, and his creatures took and bare him off,
And all was still. Then she, 'The end is come,
And I am shamed for ever;' and he said:
'Mine be the shame; mine was the sin: but rise,
And fly to my strong castle over-seas:
There will I hide thee till my life shall end,
There hold thee with my life against the world.'
She answer'd: 'Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so?
Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.
Would God that thou couldst hide me from myself!
Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou
Unwedded; yet rise now, and let us fly,
For I will draw me into sanctuary,
And bide my doom.' So Lancelot got her horse,
Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,
And then they rode to the divided way,
There kiss'd, and parted weeping: for he past,
Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen,

Back to his land; but she to Almesbury
Fled all night long by glimmering waste and weald,
And heard the spirits of the waste and weald
Moan as she fled, or thought she heard them moan:
And in herself she moan'd, 'Too late, too late!'
Till in the cold wind that foreruns the morn,
A blot in heaven, the raven, flying high,
Croak'd, and she thought, 'He spies a field of death;
For now the heathen of the Northern Sea,
Lured by the crimes and frailties of the court,
Begin to slay the folk and spoil the land.'

And when she came to Almesbury she spake
There to the nuns, and said, 'Mine enemies
Pursue me, but, O peaceful Sisterhood,
Receive and yield me sanctuary, nor ask
Her name to whom ye yield it till her time
To tell you;' and her beauty, grace, and power
Wrought as a charm upon them, and they spared
To ask it.

So the stately Queen abode
For many a week, unknown, among the nuns,
Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name, nor sought,
Wrapt in her grief, for housel or for shrift,
But communed only with the little maid,
Who pleased her with a babbling heedlessness
Which often lured her from herself; but now,
This night, a rumor wildly blown about
Came that Sir Modred had usurp'd the realm
And leagued him with the heathen, while the King
Was waging war on Lancelot: then she thought,
'With what a hate the people and the King
Must hate me,' and bow'd down upon her hands

Silent, until the little maid, who brook'd
No silence, brake it, uttering 'Late! so late!
What hour, I wonder now?' and when she drew
No answer, by and by began to hum
An air the nuns had taught her: 'Late, so late!'
Which when she heard, the Queen look'd up, and said,
'O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,
Sing, and unbind my heart that I may weep.'
Whereat full willingly sang the little maid.

'Late, late, so late! and dark the night and chill!
Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'No light had we: for that we do repent,
And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'No light: so late! and dark and chill the night!
O, let us in, that we may find the light!
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

'Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?
O, let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!
No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now.'

So sang the novice, while full passionately,
Her head upon her hands, remembering
Her thought when first she came, wept the sad Queen.
Then said the little novice prattling to her:

'O pray you, noble lady, weep no more;
But let my words — the words of one so small,
Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,

And if I do not there is penance given —
Comfort your sorrows; for they do not flow
From evil done: right sure am I of that,
Who see your tender grace and stateliness.
But weigh your sorrows with our lord the King's,
And weighing find them less; for gone is he
To wage grim war against Sir Lancelot there,
Round that strong castle where he holds the Queen;
And Modred whom he left in charge of all,
The traitor — Ah, sweet lady, the King's grief
For his own self, and his own Queen, and realm,
Must needs be thrice as great as any of ours!
For me, I thank the saints, I am not great;
For if there ever come a grief to me
I cry my cry in silence, and have done:
None knows it, and my tears have brought me good.
But even were the griefs of little ones
As great as those of great ones, yet this grief
Is added to the griefs the great must bear,
That, howsoever much they may desire
Silence, they cannot weep behind a cloud;
As even here they talk at Almesbury
About the good King and his wicked Queen,
And were I such a King with such a Queen,
Well might I wish to veil her wickedness,
But were I such a King it could not be.'

Then to her own sad heart mutter'd the Queen,
'Will the child kill me with her innocent talk?'
But openly she answer'd, 'Must not I,
If this false traitor have displaced his lord,
Grieve with the common grief of all the realm?'

'Yea,' said the maid, 'this is all woman's grief,
That *she* is woman, whose disloyal life

Hath wrought confusion in the Table Round
Which good King Arthur founded, years ago,
With signs and miracles and wonders, there
At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen.'

Then thought the Queen within herself again,
'Will the child kill me with her foolish prate?'
But openly she spake and said to her,
'O little maid, shut in by nunnery walls,
What canst thou know of Kings and Tables Round,
Or what of signs and wonders, but the signs
And simple miracles of thy nunnery?'

To whom the little novice garrulously:
'Yea, but I know: the land was full of signs
And wonders ere the coming of the Queen.
So said my father, and himself was knight
Of the great Table — at the founding of it,
And rode thereto from Lyonnesse; and he said
That as he rode, an hour or maybe twain
After the sunset, down the coast, he heard
Strange music, and he paused, and turning — there,
All down the lonely coast of Lyonnesse,
Each with a beacon-star upon his head,
And with a wild sea-light about his feet,
He saw them — headland after headland flame
Far on into the rich heart of the west:
And in the light the white mermaiden swam,
And strong man-breasted things stood from the sea,
And sent a deep sea-voice thro' all the land,
To which the little elves of chasm and cleft
Made answer, sounding like a distant horn.
So said my father — yea, and furthermore,
Next morning, while he past the dim-lit woods,
Himself beheld three spirits mad with joy

Come dashing down on a tall wayside flower,
That shook beneath them as the thistle shakes
When three gray linnets wrangle for the seed:
And still at evenings on before his horse
The flickering fairy-circle wheel'd and broke
Flying, and link'd again, and wheel'd and broke
Flying, for all the land was full of life.
And when at last he came to Camelot,
A wreath of airy dancers hand-in-hand
Swung round the lighted lantern of the hall;
And in the hall itself was such a feast
As never man had dream'd; for every knight
Had whatsoever meat he long'd for served
By hands unseen; and even as he said
Down in the cellars merry bloated things
Shoulder'd the spigot, straddling on the butts
While the wine ran: so glad were spirits and men
Before the coming of the sinful Queen.'

Then spake the Queen and somewhat bitterly,
'Were they so glad? ill prophets were they all,
Spirits and men: could none of them foresee,
Not even thy wise father with his signs
And wonders, what has fallen upon the realm?'

To whom the novice garrulously again:
'Yea, one, a bard; of whom my father said,
Full many a noble war-song had he sung,
Even in the presence of an enemy's fleet,
Between the steep cliff and the coming wave;
And many a mystic lay of life and death
Had chanted on the smoky mountain-tops,
When round him bent the spirits of the hills
With all their dewy hair blown back like flame.

So said my father — and that night the bard
Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang the King
As wellnigh more than man, and rail'd at those
Who call'd him the false son of Gorloïs:
For there was no man knew from whence he came;
But after tempest, when the long wave broke
All down the thundering shores of Bude and Bos,
There came a day as still as heaven, and then
They found a naked child upon the sands
Of dark Tintagil by the Cornish sea,
And that was Arthur; and they foster'd him
Till he by miracle was approven King:
And that his grave should be a mystery
From all men, like his birth; and could he find
A woman in her womanhood as great
As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,
The twain together well might change the world.
But even in the middle of his song
He falter'd, and his hand fell from the harp,
And pale he turn'd, and reel'd, and would have fallen,
But that they stay'd him up; nor would he tell
His vision; but what doubt that he foresaw
This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen?'

Then thought the Queen, 'Lo! they have set her on,
Our simple-seeming abbess and her nuns,
To play upon me,' and bow'd her head nor spake.
Whereat the novice crying, with clasp'd hands,
Shame on her own garrulity garrulously,
Said the good nuns would check her gadding tongue
Full often, 'and, sweet lady, if I seem
To vex an ear too sad to listen to me,
Unmannerly, with prattling and the tales
Which my good father told me, check me too

Nor let me shame my father's memory, one
Of noblest manners, tho' himself would say
Sir Lancelot had the noblest; and he died,
Kill'd in a tilt, come next, five summers back,
And left me; but of others who remain,
And of the two first-famed for courtesy —
And pray you check me if I ask amiss —
But pray you, which had noblest, while you moved
Among them, Lancelot or our lord the King?'

Then the pale Queen look'd up and answer'd her:
'Sir Lancelot, as became a noble knight,
Was gracious to all ladies, and the same
In open battle or the tilting-field
Forbore his own advantage, and the King
In open battle or the tilting-field
Forbore his own advantage, and these two
Were the most nobly-manner'd men of all;
For manners are not idle, but the fruit
Of loyal nature and of noble mind.'

'Yea,' said the maid, 'be manners such fair fruit?
Then Lancelot's needs must be a thousand-fold
Less noble, being, as all rumor runs,
The most disloyal friend in all the world.'

To which a mournful answer made the Queen:
'O, closed about by narrowing nunnery-walls,
What knowest thou of the world and all its lights
And shadows, all the wealth and all the woe?
If ever Lancelot, that most noble knight,
Were for one hour less noble than himself,
Pray for him that he scape the doom of fire,
And weep for her who drew him to his doom.'

'Yea,' said the little novice, 'I pray for both;
But I should all as soon believe that his,
Sir Lancelot's, were as noble as the King's,
As I could think, sweet lady, yours would be
Such as they are, were you the sinful Queen.'

So she, like many another babbler, hurt
Whom she would soothe, and harm'd where she would heal;
For here a sudden flush of wrathful heat
Fired all the pale face of the Queen, who cried:
'Such as thou art be never maiden more
For ever! thou their tool, set on to plague
And play upon and harry me, petty spy
And traitress!' When that storm of anger brake
From Guinevere, aghast the maiden rose,
White as her veil, and stood before the Queen
As tremulously as foam upon the beach
Stands in a wind, ready to break and fly,
And when the Queen had added, 'Get thee hence!'
Fled frighted. Then that other left alone
Sigh'd, and began to gather heart again,
Saying in herself: 'The simple, fearful child
Meant nothing, but my own too-fearful guilt,
Simpler than any child, betrays itself.
But help me, Heaven, for surely I repent!
For what is true repentance but in thought —
Not even in inmost thought to think again
The sins that made the past so pleasant to us?
And I have sworn never to see him more,
To see him more.'

And even in saying this,
Her memory from old habit of the mind

Went slipping back upon the golden days
In which she saw him first, when Lancelot came,
Reputed the best knight and goodliest man,
Ambassador, to yield her to his lord
Arthur, and led her forth, and far ahead
Of his and her retinue moving, they,
Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love
And sport and tilts and pleasure, — for the time
Was may-time, and as yet no sin was dream'd, —
Rode under groves that look'd a paradise
Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth
That seem'd the heavens upbreaking thro' the earth,
And on from hill to hill, and every day
Beheld at noon in some delicious dale
The silk pavilions of King Arthur raised
For brief repast or afternoon repose
By couriers gone before; and on again,
Till yet once more ere set of sun they saw
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship,
That crown'd the state pavilion of the King,
Blaze by the rushing brook or silent well.

But when the Queen immersed in such a trance,
And moving thro' the past unconsciously,
Came to that point where first she saw the King
Ride toward her from the city, sigh'd to find
Her journey done, glanced at him, thought him cold,
High, self-contain'd, and passionless, not like him,
'Not like my Lancelot' — while she brooded thus
And grew half-guilty in her thoughts again,
There rode an armed warrior to the doors.
A murmuring whisper thro' the nunnery ran,
Then on a sudden a cry, 'The King!' She sat
Stiff-stricken, listening; but when armed feet

Thro' the long gallery from the outer doors
Rang coming, prone from off her seat she fell,
And grovell'd with her face against the floor.
There with her milk-white arms and shadowy hair
She made her face a darkness from the King,
And in the darkness heard his armed feet
Pause by her; then came silence, then a voice,
Monotonous and hollow like a ghost's
Denouncing judgment, but, tho' changed, the King's:

'Liest thou here so low, the child of one
I honor'd, happy, dead before thy shame?
Well is it that no child is born of thee.
The children born of thee are sword and fire,
Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,
The craft of kindred and the godless hosts
Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern Sea;
Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right arm,
The mightiest of my knights, abode with me,
Have everywhere about this land of Christ
In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.
And knowest thou now from whence I come — from him,
From waging bitter war with him; and he,
That did not shun to smite me in worse way,
Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,
He spared to lift his hand against the King
Who made him knight: but many a knight was slain;
And many more and all his kith and kin
Clave to him, and abode in his own land.
And many more when Modred raised revolt,
Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.
And of this remnant will I leave a part,
True men who love me still, for whom I live,

To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,
Lest but a hair of this low head be harm'd.
Fear not: thou shalt be guarded till my death.
Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies
Have err'd not, that I march to meet my doom.
Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me,
That I the King should greatly care to live;
For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.
Bear with me for the last time while I show,
Even for thy sake, the sin which thou hast sinn'd.
For when the Roman left us, and their law
Relax'd its hold upon us, and the ways
Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a deed
Of prowess done redress'd a random wrong.
But I was first of all the kings who drew
The knighthood-errant of this realm and all
The realms together under me, their Head,
In that fair Order of my Table Round,
A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time.
I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To reverence the King, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honor his own word as if his God's,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her; for indeed I knew
Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,

Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable words
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.
And all this throve before I wedded thee,
Believing, "Lo, mine helpmate, one to feel
My purpose and rejoicing in my joy!"
Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;
Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;
Then others, following these my mightiest knights,
And drawing foul ensample from fair names,
Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite
Of all my heart had destined did obtain,
And all thro' thee! so that this life of mine
I guard as God's high gift from scathe and wrong,
Not greatly care to lose; but rather think
How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,
To sit once more within his lonely hall,
And miss the wonted number of my knights,
And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds
As in the golden days before thy sin.
For which of us who might be left could speak
Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at thee?
And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk
Thy shadow still would glide from room to room,
And I should evermore be vext with thee
In hanging robe or vacant ornament,
Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.
For think not, tho' thou wouldst not love thy lord,
Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.
I am not made of so slight elements.
Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.
I hold that man the worst of public foes
Who either for his own or children's sake,

To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife
Whom he knows false abide and rule the house:
For being thro' his cowardice allow'd
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
She like a new disease, unknown to men,
Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,
Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and saps
The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse
With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young.
Worst of the worst were that man he that reigns!
Better the King's waste hearth and aching heart
Than thou reseated in thy place of light,
The mockery of my people and their bane!'

He paused, and in the pause she crept an inch
Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.
Far off a solitary trumpet blew.
Then waiting by the doors the war-horse neigh'd
As at a friend's voice, and he spake again:

'Yet think not that I come to urge thy crimes;
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
The wrath which forced my thoughts on that fierce law,
The doom of treason and the flaming death, —
When first I learnt thee hidden here, — is past.
The pang — which, while I weigh'd thy heart with one
Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
Made my tears burn — is also past — in part.
And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
Lo, I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives! do thou for thine own soul the rest.

But how to take last leave of all I loved?
O golden hair, with which I used to play
Not knowing! O imperial-moulded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore,
Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee —
I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
But Lancelot's; nay, they never were the King's.
I cannot take thy hand; that too is flesh,
And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd; and mine own flesh,
Here looking down on thine polluted, cries,
"I loathe thee:" yet not less, O Guinevere,
For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my life
So far that my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband — not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,
I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.
Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet blow:
They summon me their King to lead mine hosts
Far down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against the man they call
My sister's son — no kin of mine, who leagues
With Lords of the White Horse, heathen, and knights,
Traitors — and strike him dead, and meet myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.
And thou remaining here wilt learn the event;
But hither shall I never come again,

Never lie by thy side, see thee no more —
Farewell!'

And while she grovell'd at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,
And in the darkness o'er her fallen head
Perceived the waving of his hands that blest.

Then, listening till those armed steps were gone,
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish found
The casement: 'peradventure,' so she thought,
'If I might see his face, and not be seen.'
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!
And near him the sad nuns with each a light
Stood, and he gave them charge about the Queen,
To guard and foster her for evermore.
And while he spake to these his helm was lower'd,
To which for crest the golden dragon clung
Of Britain; so she did not see the face,
Which then was as an angel's, but she saw,
Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights,
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire.
And even then he turn'd; and more and more
The moony vapor rolling round the King,
Who seem'd the phantom of a giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him gray
And grayer, till himself became as mist
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

Then she stretch'd out her arms and cried aloud,
'O Arthur!' there her voice brake suddenly,
Then — as a stream that spouting from a cliff
Fails in mid air, but gathering at the base

Re-makes itself, and flashes down the vale —
Went on in passionate utterance:

'Gone — my lord!
Gone thro' my sin to slay and to be slain!
And he forgave me, and I could not speak.
Farewell? I should have answer'd his farewell.
His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord the King,
My own true lord! how dare I call him mine?
The shadow of another cleaves to me,
And makes me one pollution: he, the King,
Call'd me polluted: shall I kill myself?
What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,
If soul be soul; nor can I kill my shame;
No, nor by living can I live it down.
The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to months,
The months will add themselves and make the years,
The years will roll into the centuries,
And mine will ever be a name of scorn.
I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.
Let the world be; that is but of the world —
What else? what hope? I think there was a hope,
Except he mock'd me when he spake of hope;
His hope he call'd it; but he never mocks,
For mockery is the fume of little hearts.
And blessed be the King, who hath forgiven
My wickedness to him, and left me hope
That in mine own heart I can live down sin
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
Before high God! Ah great and gentle lord,
Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint
Among his warring senses, to thy knights —
To whom my false voluptuous pride, that took
Full easily all impressions from below,

Would not look up, or half-despised the height
To which I would not or I could not climb —
I thought I could not breathe in that fine air,
That pure severity of perfect light —
I yearn'd for warmth and color which I found
In Lancelot — now I see thee what thou art,
Thou art the highest and most human too,
Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none
Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?
Now — ere he goes to the great battle? none:
Myself must tell him in that purer life,
But now it were too daring. Ah my God,
What might I not have made of thy fair world,
Had I but loved thy highest creature here?
It was my duty to have loved the highest;
It surely was my profit had I known;
It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
We needs must love the highest when we see it,
Not Lancelot, nor another.'

Here her hand
Grasp'd, made her vail her eyes: she look'd and saw
The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said to her,
'Yea, little maid, for am *I* not forgiven?'
Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns
All round her, weeping; and her heart was loosed
Within her, and she wept with these and said:

'Ye know me then, that wicked one, who broke
The vast design and purpose of the King.
O, shut me round with narrowing nunnery-walls,
Meek maidens, from the voices crying, "Shame!"
I must not scorn myself: he loves me still.
Let no one dream but that he loves me still.

So let me, if you do not shudder at me,
Nor shun to call me sister, dwell with you;
Wear black and white, and be a nun like you,
Fast with your fasts, not feasting with your feasts;
Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at your joys,
But not rejoicing; mingle with your rites;
Pray and be pray'd for; lie before your shrines;
Do each low office of your holy house;
Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole
To poor sick people, richer in His eyes
Who ransom'd us, and haler too than I;
And treat their loathsome hurts and heal mine own;
And so wear out in alms-deed and in prayer
The sombre close of that voluptuous day
Which wrought the ruin of my lord the King.'

She said: they took her to themselves; and she
Still hoping, fearing 'is it yet too late?'
Dwelt with them, till in time their abbess died.
Then she, for her good deeds and her pure life,
And for the power of ministration in her,
And likewise for the high rank she had borne,
Was chosen abbess, there, an abbess, lived
For three brief years, and there, an abbess, past
To where beyond these voices there is peace.

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.

THAT story which the bold Sir Bedivere,
First made and latest left of all the knights,
Told, when the man was no more than a voice
In the white winter of his age, to those
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other minds.

For on their march to westward, Bedivere,
Who slowly paced among the slumbering host,
Heard in his tent the moanings of the King:

'I found Him in the shining of the stars,
I mark'd Him in the flowering of His fields,
But in His ways with men I find Him not.
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die.
O me! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,
But had not force to shape it as he would,
Till the High God behold it from beyond,
And enter it, and make it beautiful?
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,
But that these eyes of men are dense and dim,
And have not power to see it as it is:
Perchance, because we see not to the close;—
For I, being simple, thought to work His will,
And have but stricken with the sword in vain;
And all whereon I lean'd in wife and friend
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm

Reels back into the beast, and is no more.
My God, thou hast forgotten me in my death:
Nay — God my Christ — I pass but shall not die.'

Then, ere that last weird battle in the west,
There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain kill'd
In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain blown
Along a wandering wind, and past his ear
Went shrilling: 'Hollow, hollow all delight!
Hail, King! to-morrow thou shalt pass away.
Farewell! there is an isle of rest for thee.
And I am blown along a wandering wind,
And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight!'
And fainter onward, like wild birds that change
Their season in the night and wail their way
From cloud to cloud, down the long wind the dream
Shrill'd; but in going mingled with dim cries
Far in the moonlit haze among the hills,
As of some lonely city sack'd by night,
When all is lost, and wife and child with wail
Pass to new lords; and Arthur woke and call'd:
'Who spake? A dream. O light upon the wind,
Thine, Gawain, was the voice — are these dim cries
Thine? or doth all that haunts the waste and wild
Mourn, knowing it will go along with me?'

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and spake:
'O me, my King, let pass whatever will,
Elves, and the harmless glamour of the field;
But in their stead thy name and glory cling
To all high places like a golden cloud
For ever: but as yet thou shalt not pass.
Light was Gawain in life, and light in death
Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man;

And care not thou for dreams from him, but rise —
I hear the steps of Modred in the west,
And with him many of thy people, and knights
Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but grosser grown
Than heathen, spitting at their vows and thee.
Right well in heart they know thee for the King.
Arise, go forth and conquer as of old.'

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'Far other is this battle in the west
Whereto we move than when we strove in youth,
And brake the petty kings, and fought with Rome,
Or thrust the heathen from the Roman wall,
And shook him thro' the north. Ill doom is mine
To war against my people and my knights.
The king who fights his people fights himself.
And they my knights, who loved me once, the stroke
That strikes them dead is as my death to me.
Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way
Thro' this blind haze which, ever since I saw
One lying in the dust at Almesbury,
Hath folded in the passes of the world.'

Then rose the King and moved his host by night,
And ever push'd Sir Modred, league by league,
Back to the sunset bound of Lyonnesse —
A land of old upheaven from the abyss
By fire, to sink into the abyss again;
Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt,
And the long mountains ended in a coast
Of ever-shifting sand, and far away
The phantom circle of a moaning sea.
There the pursuer could pursue no more,
And he that fled no further fly the King;

And there, that day when the great light of heaven
Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year,
On the waste sand by the waste sea they closed.
Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the west.
A death-white mist slept over sand and sea,
Whereof the chill, to him who breathed it, drew
Down with his blood, till all his heart was cold
With formless fear; and even on Arthur fell
Confusion, since he saw not whom he fought.
For friend and foe were shadows in the mist,
And friend slew friend not knowing whom he slew;
And some had visions out of golden youth,
And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
Look in upon the battle; and in the mist
Was many a noble deed, many a base,
And chance and craft and strength in single fights,
And ever and anon with host to host
Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail hewn,
Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands, the crash
Of battle-axes on shatter'd helms, and shrieks
After the Christ, of those who falling down
Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the mist;
And shouts of heathen and the traitor knights,
Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blasphemies,
Sweat, writhings, anguish, laboring of the lungs
In that close mist, and cryings for the light,
Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead.

Last, as by some one deathbed after wail
Of suffering, silence follows, or thro' death
Or death-like swoon, thus over all that shore,
Save for some whisper of the seething seas,
A dead hush fell; but when the dolorous day

Grew drearier toward twilight falling, came
A bitter wind, clear from the north, and blew
The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
Rose, and the pale King glanced across the field
Of battle: but no man was moving there;
Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,
Nor yet of heathen; only the wan wave
Brake in among dead faces, to and fro,
Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down
Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,
And shiver'd brands that once had fought with Rome,
And rolling far along the gloomy shores
The voice of days of old and days to be.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,
And whiter than the mist that all day long
Had held the field of battle was the King:

'Hearest thou this great voice that shakes the world,
And wastes the narrow realm whereon we move,
And beats upon the faces of the dead,
My dead, as tho' they had not died for me?—
O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fallen
Confusion, till I know not what I am,
Nor whence I am, nor whether I be king;
Behold, I seem but king among the dead.'

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere: 'My King;
King everywhere! and so the dead have kings,
There also will I worship thee as king.
Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live
Who love thee; but who hates thee, he that brought
The heathen back among us, yonder stands,
Modred, unharm'd, the traitor of thine house.'

Then spake the King: 'My house hath been my doom.
But call not thou this traitor of my house
Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me.
My house are rather they who sware my vows,
Yea, even while they brake them, own'd me king.
And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,
When all the purport of my throne hath fail'd,
That quick or dead thou holdest me for king.
King am I, whatsoever be their cry;
And one last act of kinghood shalt thou see
Yet, ere I pass.' And uttering this the King
Made at the man: then Modred smote his liege
Hard on that helm which many a heathen sword
Had beaten thin; while Arthur at one blow,
Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,
Slew him, and, all but slain himself, he fell.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonnesse about their lord,
King Arthur. Then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land:
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep — the men I loved. I think that we

Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made, —
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more ; but, let what will be be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride : for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword — and how I row'd across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king ;
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known.
But now delay not : take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere ;
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word.'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm —
A little thing may harm a wounded man ;
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept,
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down

By zigzag paths and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt;
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw: but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted water-flags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight;
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.

Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.'

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fixt in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud:

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? Deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumors of a doubt? But were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying: "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely Maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honor and much fame were lost.'

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
'Ah miserable, and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendor of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,

Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the Northern Sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur;
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or seen?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
'My end draws nigh; 't is time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes

As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words;
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, 'Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels —
And on a sudden, lo, the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon!

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms,
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream — by these
Three queens with crowns of gold: and from them rose
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills

All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the barge.'
So to the barge they came. There those three queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against a brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white
And colorless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls —
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne — were parch'd with dust,
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mixt with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shatter'd column lay the King;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere:
'Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.

But now the whole Round Table is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world,
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the barge:
'The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within himself make pure! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest — if indeed I go —
For all my mind is clouded with a doubt —
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan

That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

But when that moan had past for evermore,
The stillness of the dead world's winter dawn
Amazed him, and he groan'd, 'The King is gone.'
And therewithal came on him the weird rhyme,
'From the great deep to the great deep he goes.'

Whereat he slowly turn'd and slowly clomb
The last hard footstep of that iron crag,
Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet, and cried:
'He passes to be king among the dead,
And after healing of his grievous wound
He comes again; but — if he come no more —
O me, be yon dark queens in yon black boat,
Who shriek'd and wail'd, the three whereat we gazed
On that high day, when, clothed with living light,
They stood before his throne in silence, friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need?'

Then from the dawn it seem'd there came, but faint
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about, and clomb
Even to the highest he could climb, and saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,

Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the King,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light.
And the new sun rose bringing the new year.

TO THE QUEEN.

O LOYAL to the royal in thyself,
And loyal to thy land, as this to thee —
Bear witness, that rememberable day,
When, pale as yet and fever-worn, the Prince
Who scarce had pluck'd his flickering life again
From halfway down the shadow of the grave
Past with thee thro' thy people and their love,
And London roll'd one tide of joy thro' all
Her trebled millions, and loud leagues of man
And welcome! witness, too, the silent cry,
The prayer of many a race and creed, and clime —
Thunderless lightnings striking under sea
From sunset and sunrise of all thy realm,
And that true North, whereof we lately heard
A strain to shame us, 'Keep you to yourselves;
So loyal is too costly! friends — your love
Is but a burthen: loose the bond, and go.'
Is this the tone of empire? here the faith
That made us rulers? this, indeed, her voice
And meaning whom the roar of Hougoumont
Left mightiest of all peoples under heaven?
What shock has fool'd her since, that she should speak
So feebly? wealthier — wealthier — hour by hour!
The voice of Britain, or a sinking land,
Some third-rate isle half-lost among her seas?
There rang her voice, when the full city peal'd

Thee and thy Prince! The loyal to their crown
Are loyal to their own far sons, who love
Our ocean-empire with her boundless homes
For ever-broadening England, and her throne
In our vast Orient, and one isle, one isle,
That knows not her own greatness: if she knows
And dreads it we are fallen. — But thou, my Queen,
Not for itself, but thro' thy living love
For one to whom I made it o'er his grave
Sacred, accept this old imperfect tale,
New-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul,
Ideal manhood closed in real man,
Rather than that gray king whose name, a ghost,
Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain peak,
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still; or him
Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleor's, one
Touch'd by the adulterous finger of a time
That hover'd between war and wantonness,
And crownings and dethronements: take withal
Thy poet's blessing, and his trust that Heaven
Will blow the tempest in the distance back
From thine and ours: for some are scared, who mark,
Or wisely or unwisely, signs of storm,
Waverings of every vane with every wind,
And wordy trucklings to the transient hour,
And fierce or careless looseners of the faith,
And Softness breeding scorn of simple life,
Or Cowardice, the child of lust for gold,
Or Labor, with a groan and not a voice,
Or Art with poisonous honey stolen from France,
And that which knows, but careful for itself,
And that which knows not, ruling that which knows
To its own harm: the goal of this great world
Lies beyond sight: yet — if our slowly-grown
And crown'd Republic's crowning common-sense,

That saved her many times, not fail — their fears
Are morning shadows huger than the shapes
That cast them, not those gloomier which forego
The darkness of that battle in the west
Where all of high and holy dies away.

NOTES.

NOTES.

LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

For the history of the *Idylls*, and critical matter upon the series of poems, see vol. i. pp. 179–190. *Lancelot and Elaine* was first published in 1859, when the title was simply *Elaine.*

The outline of the story is from Malory (book xviii. chapters 7 to 21), whom the poet has followed very closely in many passages, as will be seen by the illustrative extracts given below.

Littledale, in his comments upon the poem, remarks: "This is perhaps the most *idyllic* of the *Idylls* — and it is in some respects the most touching, as a picture of Elaine's love, 'that never found its mortal close,' and Lancelot's great and guilty passion, that 'marred his face and marked it ere his time.' Tennyson's power of drawing the characters of simple and lovable women is here seen to perfection. It is easy enough to represent a woman in whom the elements of good and evil are mingled, or in whom the latter predominate, — such a character is in no danger of being too neutral-tinted or monotonous; but it is a far harder task to depict women like Enid and Elaine, fair and lovable beings, with all the charm of purity and goodness, but moving steadfastly within the orbit of homely simple duties, and lacking the effect of deviation, the contrast of light and shade, that we see in the lives of less clear-natured women. In delineating these gracious creatures Tennyson stands unrivalled; and in his rare sympathy with such types of womanly purity we may perceive the almost feminine delicacy of his mind."

2. *The lily maid of Astolat.* "Elaine le Blank" (*blanche*, or white), as Malory calls her. See on 175 below. *Astolat*, he says, "is now in English called Gilford," that is, Guilford in Surrey.

7. *Fearing rust or soilure.* Knights usually kept their shields covered to prevent *rust or soilure*, and doubtless many a fair damsel, like Elaine, wrought a cover for the shield of her favorite warrior.

9. *Blazon'd.* Displayed in color. See vol. i. p. 197.

12. *Yellow-throated nestling.* One of the many illustrations of the poet's minute observation of nature.

34. *For Arthur*, etc. The 1859 ed. reads thus: —

> "For Arthur when none knew from whence he came,
> Long ere the people chose him for their king,
> Roving the trackless realms," etc.

35. *Lyonnesse.* This district is supposed to have stretched from Cornwall to the Scilly Islands, but is now submerged.

45. *And he that once was king.* &c. Originally, "And one of these, the king, had on a crown," etc.

53. *The shingly scaur.* A rocky slope covered with *shingle*, or loose pebbles. Cf. *Enoch Arden*, 733: "Lest the harsh shingle should grate underfoot."

59. *Divinely.* Providentially, as by divine guidance.

67. *Still.* Always, at each of the eight jousts. See vol. i. p. 195.

75. *The place*, etc. That is, London.

78. *Spake — for she had been sick — to Guinevere*, etc. Cf. Malory (xviii. 8): "So King Arthur made him ready to depart to those jousts, and would have had the queen with him; but at that time she would not, she said, for she was sick and might not ride at that time. . . . And many deemed the queen would not be there because of Sir Launcelot du Lake, for Sir Launcelot would not ride with the King; for he said that he was not whole of the wound the which Sir Mador had given him. Wherefore the King was heavy and passing wroth," etc.

80. '*Yea, lord*,' *she said*, '*ye know it*,' etc. The 1859 ed. has "you" for *ye*, as in the next line and in 83; also in many other places in this Idyll which we shall not take the trouble to note.

91. *The tale of diamonds.* The count, or full number. Cf. Macaulay, *Horatius*, 83: —

> "And now hath every city
> Sent up her tale of men."

See also *Exodus*, v. 8, etc.

94. *Lets me.* Hinders me. Cf. *Hamlet*, i. 4. 85: "I 'll make a ghost of him that lets me," etc.

97. *To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot*, etc. Cf. Malory (xviii. 8): "Sir Launcelot, ye are greatly to blame, thus to hold you behind my lord; what trow ye, what will your enemies and mine say and deem? nought else but see how Sir Launcelot holdeth him ever behind the king and so doth the queen, for that they would be together: and thus will they say, said the queen to Launcelot, have ye no doubt thereof."

106. *The myriad cricket.* Cf. *Enoch Arden*, 579: "The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean-fowl."

118. *Devoir.* Duty (French). Cf. Marlowe, *Edward II.* v. 2: "To do your highness service and devoir," etc.

132. *He is all fault*, etc. Cf. *Maud*, i. 2: "Faultily faultless, icily regular," etc.

134. *The low sun.* That is, the rising or the setting sun.

168. *Blew the gateway horn.* Originally, "wound" for *blew*.

175. *And rose behind them*, etc. Cf. Malory (xviii. 9): "This old baron had a daughter that time that was called that time the fair maid of Astolat. And ever she beheld Sir Launcelot wonderfully. And, as the book saith, she cast such a love unto Sir Launcelot that she could never withdraw her love, wherefore she died; and her name was Elaine le Blank. So thus as she came to and fro, she was so hot in her love

that she besought Sir Launcelot to wear upon him at the justs a token of hers. Fair damsel, said Sir Launcelot, and if I grant you that, ye may say I do more for your love than ever I did for lady or damsel. Then he remembered him that he would go to the justs disguised, and for because he had never afore that time borne no manner of token of no damsel, then he bethought him that he would bear one of her, that none of his blood thereby might know him. And then he said, Fair maiden, I will grant you to wear a token of yours upon my helmet, and therefore what it is shew it me. Sir, she said, it is a red sleeve of mine, of scarlet well embroidered with great pearls. And so she brought it him. So Sir Launcelot received it and said, Never did I erst so much for no damsel. And then Sir Launcelot betook the fair maiden his shield in keeping, and prayed her to keep that until that he came again. And so that night he had merry rest and great cheer. For ever the damsel Elaine was about Sir Launcelot, all the while she might be suffered."

180. *By what name*, etc. This has been compared with Virgil, *Æneid*, xii. 235: "Succedet fama, vivusque per ora feretur."

251. *And drove him into wastes*, etc. Cf. *Luke*, viii. 29.

253. *Marr'd as he was*, etc. As Littledale remarks, these words contain a reminiscence of Sir Ector's words (Malory, xxi. 13), when Launcelot is dead: "Ah, Launcelot, he said, thou were head of all Christian knights; and now I dare say, said Sir Ector, thou Sir Launcelot, there thou liest, that thou were never matched of earthly knight's hand; and thou were the courtiest knight that ever bare shield; and thou were the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrode horse; and thou were the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman; and thou were the kindest man that ever strake with sword; and thou were the goodliest person ever came among press of knights; and thou was the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies; and thou were the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest."

279. *On Badon Hill.* Green, in his *Short History of the English People*, says: "It is certain that a victory of the Britons at Mount Badon in the year 520 checked the progress of the West Saxons, and was followed by a long pause in their advance." The locality is supposed to be Badbury Hill in Dorsetshire, but like the other places mentioned, has been variously identified by different authorities. Indeed this battle is the only one of those referred to here which is not regarded as mythical.

288. *The four loud battles.* Originally, "wild battles."

The list of the twelve great battles, as Littledale notes, is first found in Nennius, whom Tennyson follows. Compare the translation of Nennius in Bohn's *Six Chronicles*, p. 408: "Then it was that the magnanimous Arthur, with all the kings and military force of Britain, fought against the Saxons. And though there were many more noble than himself, yet he was twelve times chosen their commander, and was as often conqueror. The first battle in which he was engaged, was at the mouth of the river Gleni. The second, third, fourth, and fifth, were on another river, by the Britons called Dubglas, in the region Linuis. The sixth, on the river Bassas. The seventh, in the wood Celidon, wh[illegible]

the Britons call Cat Coit Celidon. The eighth was near Gurnion Castle, where Arthur bore the image of the Holy Virgin, mother of God, upon his shoulders, and through the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the holy Mary, put the Saxons to flight, and pursued them the whole day with great slaughter. The ninth was at the City of Legion, which is called Caer Leon. The tenth was on the banks of the river Trat Treuroit. The eleventh was on the mountain Breguoin, which we call Cat Bregion. The twelfth was a most severe contest, when Arthur penetrated to the hill of Badon. In this engagement, nine hundred and forty fell by his hand alone, no one but the Lord affording him assistance. In all these engagements the Britons were successful. For no strength can avail against the will of the Almighty."

From this account, as Littledale suggests, it would seem as if Arthur had borne a sacred image on his shoulder during the battle of Castle Gurnion. Geoffrey of Monmouth says that the picture of the blessed Mary was on Arthur's shield Priwen, in order to put him in mind of her, and this is the version generally found in the romances, and followed even by Wordsworth (*Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, i. 10): —

> "Arthur, bearing through the stormy field
> The Virgin sculptured on his Christian shield."

Tennyson seems to have been thinking of the famous "Russian emerald," said to have been sent originally by Pilate to Tiberius. It is supposed to have the head of Christ carved upon it, but Mr. King (*The Gnostics*, p. 146) gives reasons for doubting this.

297. *The wild White Horse.* The emblem of the Saxons. Cf. *The Holy Grail*, 311, and *Guinevere*, 15.

314. *The fire of God.* Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, 127: —

> "'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of God
> Descends upon thee in the battle-field.'"

325. *To make him cheer.* To show him hospitality.

338. *Till rathe she rose. Rathe*, of which the comparative is *rather*, means early. Cf. *In Memoriam*, cx. 1: "The men of rathe and riper years;" and Milton, *Lycidas*, 142: "Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies." Spenser (*Shepherd's Calendar*, Feb.) has the comparative in its original sense: "the rather lambes."

392. *Paused by the gateway, standing near the shield.* Originally, "Paused in the gateway, standing by the shield."

409. *A noise of falling showers.* For *noise* in the archaic sense of a pleasing sound or music, cf. *The Tempest*, iii. 2. 144: —

> "the isle is full of noises,
> Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not;"

Milton, *Hymn on the Nativity*, 97: "Answering the stringed noise;" Spenser, *F. Q.* i. 12. 39: "During which time there was an heavenly noise;" and Coleridge, *Ancient Mariner*: —

> "It ceased; yet still the sails made on
> A pleasant noise till noon —
> A noise as of a hidden brook

In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune."

431. *Samite.* Heavy silk. See vol. i. p. 192.

446. *Now crescent.* Cf. 1389, below.

453. *Held the lists.* Awaited the attack, defended themselves.

474. *A fury seized them all.* Originally, "seized on them."

Cf. Malory (xviii. 11): "So these nine knights of Sir Launcelot's kin thrust in mightily, for they were all noble knights. And they, of great hate and despite that they had unto him, thought to rebuke that noble knight Sir Launcelot, and Sir Lavaine, for they knew them not. And so they came hurtling together, and smote down many knights of Northgalis and of Northumberland. And when Sir Launcelot saw them fare so, he gat a spear in his hand, and there encountered with him all at once Sir Bors, Sir Ector, and Sir Lionel, and all they three smote him at once with their spears. And with force of themselves they smote Sir Launcelot's horse to the earth. And by misfortune Sir Bors smote Sir Launcelot through the shield into the side, and the spear brake, and the head left still in his side. When Sir Lavaine saw his master lie on the ground, he ran to the king of Scots, and smote him to the earth, and by great force he took his horse and brought him to Sir Launcelot, and maugre them all he made him to mount upon that horse. And then Launcelot gat a spear in his hand, and there he smote Sir Bors horse and man to the earth, in the same wise he served Sir Ector and Sir Lionel, and Sir Lavaine smote down Sir Blamor de Ganis. And then Sir Launcelot drew his sword, for he felt himself so sore and hurt that he wend there to have had his death. And then he smote Sir Bleoberis such a buffet on the helmet that he fell down to the earth in a swoon. And in the same wise he served Sir Aliduke and Sir Galihud. And Sir Lavaine smote down Sir Bellangere, that was the son of Alisander le Orphelin. And by this was Sir Bors horsed, and then he came with Sir Ector and Sir Lionel, and all they three smote with swords upon Sir Launcelot's helmet. And when he felt their buffets, and his wound the which was so grievous, then he thought to do what he might while he might endure; and then he gave Sir Bors such a buffet that he made him bow his head passing low, and therewithal he rased off his helm, and might have slain him, and so pulled him down. And in the same wise he served Sir Ector and Sir Lionel. For, as the book saith, he might have slain them, but when he saw their visages his heart might not serve him thereto, but left them there.

"And then afterward he hurled in the thickest press of them all, and did there the marvellousest deeds of arms that ever man saw or heard speak of; and ever Sir Lavaine the good knight with him. And there Sir Launcelot with his sword smote and pulled down, as the French book maketh mention, more than thirty knights, and the most party were of the Table Round. And Sir Lavaine did full well that day, for he smote down ten knights of the Table Round."

498. *Then the trumpets blew.* Originally, "heralds" for *trumpets.*

502. *Diamond me No diamonds!* Cf. *Richard II.* ii. 3. 87: "Grace me no grace, nor uncle me no uncles;" *Romeo and Juliet,* iii. 5. 153:

"Thank me no thanks, nor proud me no prouds;" Dryden, *The Wild Gallant*, ii. 2: "Madam me no madam," etc.

509. *Draw the lance-head.* Cf. Malory (xviii. 2): "O gentle knight Sir Lavaine, help me that this truncheon were out of my side, for it sticketh so sore that it nigh slayeth me. O mine own lord, said Sir Lavaine, I would fain do that might please you, but I dread me sore, and I draw out the truncheon, that ye shall be in peril of death. I charge you, said Sir Launcelot, as ye love me draw it out. And therewithal he descended from his horse, and right so did Sir Lavaine, and forthwith Sir Lavaine drew the truncheon out of his side. And he gave a great shriek, and a marvellous grisly groan, and his blood brast out nigh a pint at once, that at last he sank down, and so swooned pale and deadly."

513. *And Sir Lancelot gave*, etc. Originally, "and that other gave," etc.

534. *He must not pass*, etc. The 1859 ed. reads:—

> "He must not pass uncared for. Gawain, arise,
> My nephew, and ride forth and find the knight."

543. *Ourselves will send it after.* In *The Princess* the poet changed the *ourselves* of the early editions to *ourself* except in one instance (see our edition, p. 154) where it was accidentally retained.

Rise and take. Originally, "Wherefore take," etc.

545. *Where he is.* Originally, "what he is."

555. *And Gareth, a good knight.* Originally, "Lamorack" for *Gareth*; and in the next line, "of a crafty house" for *and the child of Lot.*

567. *Tarriance.* Cf. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ii. 7. 90: "I am impatient of my tarriance."

583. *Our true Arthur*, etc. It was the Queen, not Lancelot, who had said this. Cf. 151, above.

592. *So fine a fear.* That is, over-sensitive. There is a touch of sarcasm in the expression.

595. *Ill news this!* Originally, "these" for *this.*

605. *Past to her chamber.* Originally, "Moved to her chamber."

626. *The victor, but had ridden*, etc. The 1859 ed. reads thus:—

> "The victor that had ridden wildly round,
> To seek him, and was wearied of the search.
> To whom the Lord of Astolat, 'Bide with us,
> And ride no longer wildly, noble Prince!'"

653. *The hern we slipt her at.* Originally, "him" for *her*, which was a slip, as the male bird was seldom used in hawking, the female being larger and stronger.

658. *And when the shield was brought*, etc. Cf. Malory (xviii. 14): "Ah, mercy, said Sir Gawaine, now is my heart more heavier than ever it was tofore. Why? said Elaine. For I have great cause, said Sir Gawaine; is that knight that owneth this shield your love? Yea truly, said she, my love he is, God would I were his love. Truly, said Sir Gawaine, fair damsel, ye have right, for, and he be your love, ye love the most honourable knight of the world, and the man of most worship

So me thought ever, said the damsel, for never, or that time, for no knight that ever I saw loved I never none erst. God grant, said Sir Gawaine, that either of you may rejoice other, but that is in a great adventure. But truly, said Sir Gawaine unto the damsel, ye may say ye have a fair grace, for why, I have known that noble knight this four and twenty year, and never or that day I nor none other knight, I dare make it good, saw nor heard say that ever he bare token or sign of no lady, gentlewoman, nor maiden, at no justs nor tournament. And therefore, fair maiden, said Sir Gawaine, ye are much beholden to him to give him thanks. But I dread me, said Sir Gawaine, that ye shall never see him in this world, and that is great pity that ever was of earthly knight. Alas, said she, how may this be? Is he slain? I say not so, said Sir Gawaine, but wit ye well, he is grievously wounded, by all manner of signs, and by men's sight more likely to be dead then to be on live; and wit ye well he is the noble knight Sir Launcelot, for by this shield I know him. Alas, said the fair maiden of Astolat, how may this be, and what was his hurt? Truly said Sir Gawaine, the man in the world that loved him best hurt him so, and I dare say, said Sir Gawaine, and that knight that hurt him knew the very certainty that he had hurt Sir Launcelot, it would be the most sorrow that ever came to his heart. Now, fair father, said then Elaine, I require you give me leave to ride and to seek him, or else I wot well I shall go out of my mind, for I shall never stint till that I find him and my brother Sir Lavaine. Do as it liketh you, said her father, for me right sore repenteth of the hurt of that noble knight. Right so the maid made her ready, and before Sir Gawaine making great dole. Then on the morn Sir Gawaine came to king Arthur, and told him how he had found Sir Launcelot's shield in the keeping of the fair maiden of Astolat. All that knew I aforehand, said king Arthur, and that caused me I would not suffer you to have ado at the great justs: for I espied, said king Arthur, when he came in till his lodging, full late in the evening in Astolat. But marvel have I, said Arthur, that ever he would bear any sign of any damsel: for, or [before] now, I never heard say nor knew that ever he bare any token of none earthly woman. By my head, said Sir Gawaine, the fair maiden of Astolat loveth him marvellously well; what it meaneth I cannot say; and she is ridden after to seek him. So the king and all came to London, and there Sir Gawaine openly disclosed to all the court that it was Sir Launcelot that justed best."

674. *I know there is none other I can love.* Originally, "Methinks there is," etc.

683. *Nay — like enow.* Originally, "May it be so?"

728. *Marr'd her friend's aim*, etc. Thwarted her purpose by receiving the intelligence calmly. *Aim* was originally "point."

798. *His own far blood.* That is, distant relatives.

806. *Wherein he slept.* Originally, "in which he slept."

810. *Then she that saw him lying*, etc. Cf. Malory (xviii. 15): "And when she saw him lie so sick and pale in his bed, she might not speak, but suddenly she fell to the earth down suddenly in a swoon, and there she lay a great while. And when she was relieved she sighed, and said, My lord Sir Launcelot, alas, why be ye in this plight? and then she

swooned again. And then Sir Launcelot prayed Sir Lavaine to take her up, — And bring her to me. And when she came to herself, Sir Launcelot kissed her, and said, Fair maiden, why fare ye thus? Ye put me to pain; wherefore make ye no more such cheer, for, and ye be come to comfort me, ye be right welcome, and of this little hurt that I have, I shall be right hastily whole, by the grace of God. But I marvel, said Sir Launcelot, who told you my name."

826. *Your ride hath wearied you* Originally, "has wearied you."

836. *He not regarded.* For the position of the negative, cf. *Geraint and Enid*, 151: "you that not obey me;" and see note in vol. i. p. 209.

839. *The weirdly-sculptured gates.* Originally, "wildly-sculptured;" perhaps a misprint.

877. *The bright image.* Originally, "the sweet image."

905. *The victim's flowers before he fall.* The allusion is to an animal crowned with flowers for sacrifice.

920. *Seeing I go to-day.* Originally, "Seeing I must go to-day."

924. *Then suddenly and passionately she spoke*, etc. Cf. Malory (xviii. 19): "My lord Sir Launcelot, now I see ye will depart, now, fair knight and courteous knight, have mercy upon me, and suffer me not to die for thy love. What would ye that I did? said Sir Launcelot. I would have you to my husband, said Elaine. Fair damsel, I thank you, said Sir Launcelot, but truly, said he, I cast me never to be wedded man. Then, fair knight, said she, will ye be my love? Jesu defend me, said Sir Launcelot, for then I rewarded to your father and your brother full evil for their great goodness. Alas, said she, then must I die for your love. Ye shall not so, said Sir Launcelot, for wit ye well, fair maiden, I might have been married and I had would, but I never applied me to be married yet. But because, fair damsel, that ye love me as ye say ye do, I will, for your good will and kindness, shew you some goodness, and that is this; that wheresoever ye will beset your heart upon some good knight that will wed you, I shall give you together a thousand pound yearly, to you and to your heirs. Thus much will I give you, fair maiden, for your kindness, and always while I live to be your own knight. Of all this, said the maiden, I will none, for, but if ye will wed me, or else be my lover, wit you well, Sir Launcelot, my good days are done. Fair damsel, said Sir Launcelot, of these two things ye must pardon me. Then she shrieked shrilly, and fell down in a swoon."

Stopford Brooke remarks here: "She rises to the very verge of innocent maidenliness in passionate love, but she does not go over the verge. And to be on the verge, and not to pass beyond it, is the very peak of innocent girlhood when seized by overmastering love. It was as difficult to represent Elaine as to represent Juliet; and Tennyson has succeeded well where Shakespeare has succeeded beautifully. It is great praise, but it is well deserved."

997. *And in those days she made a little song.* "And the song, how simply wrought it is, and yet how subtly — with the subtlety of long passion's interwoven thought! It is almost like a piece out of the Sonnets of Shakespeare, full of his to-and-fro play with words that are thoughts; with the same kind of all-pervading emotion in the lines; the

same truth to the situation and the character of the singer; and with Tennyson's deep-seated waters of love — which too rarely come to the surface — welling upwards in it" (Stopford Brooke).

1015. *Hark the phantom of the house*, etc. As Littledale remarks, this phantom is described in Croker's stories of the Banshee (*Fairy Legends*, pages 103, 119). Compare Scott's *Rosabelle*, and see Baring-Gould's *Curious Myths* (2d series, pages 215, 225). For a remarkable account of such a phantom, compare quotation from the manuscript Memoirs of Lady Fanshaw in Dyer's *English Folk-lore*: "Her husband, Sir Richard, and she chanced, during their abode in Ireland, to visit a friend, who resided in his ancient baronial castle, surrounded with a moat. At midnight she was awakened by a ghastly and supernatural scream, and looking out of bed, beheld, by the moonlight, a female face and part of the form, hovering near the window. The face was that of a young and rather handsome woman, but pale; and the hair, which was reddish, was loose and dishevelled. This apparition continued to exhibit itself for some time, and then vanished with two shrieks, similar to that which had first excited Lady Fanshaw's attention. In the morning, with infinite terror, she communicated to her host what had happened, and found him prepared not only to credit, but to account for what had happened. 'A near relation of my family,' said he, 'expired last night in this castle. Before such an event happens in this family and castle, the female spectre whom you have seen is always visible. She is believed to be the spirit of a woman of inferior rank, whom one of my ancestors degraded himself by marrying, and whom afterwards, to expiate the dishonor done to his family, he caused to be drowned in the castle moat.'"

1048. *Muse at me*. Wonder at me. Cf. *Macbeth*, iii. 4. 85: "Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends;" *King John*, iii. 1. 317: "I muse your majesty doth seem so cold," etc.

1060. *To whom the gentle sister made reply*. Originally, "To which," etc.

1092. *The ghostly man*. The priest. Cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, iii. 3. 49: "Being a divine, a ghostly confessor, etc."

1093. *Shrive me clean*. Give me absolution after confession.

Cf. Malory (xviii. 19): "Now speak we of the fair maiden of Astolat, that made such sorrow day and night, that she never slept, eat, nor drank; and ever she made her complaint unto Sir Launcelot. So when she had thus endured a ten days, that she feebled so that she must needs pass out of this world, then she shrived her clean, and received her Creator. And ever she complained still upon Sir Launcelot. Then her ghostly father bade her leave such thoughts. Then she said, Why should I leave such thoughts? am I not an earthly woman? and all the while the breath is in my body I may complain me, for my belief is I do none offence though I love an earthly man, and I take God to my record I never loved none but Sir Launcelot du Lake, nor never shall; and a pure maiden I am for him and for all other. And since it is the sufferance of God that I shall die for the love of so noble a knight, I beseech the High Father of heaven to have mercy upon my soul, and upon mine innumerable pains that I suffered may be allegiance of part

of my sins. For sweet Lord Jesu, said the fair maiden, I take thee to record, on thee I was never great offender against thy laws, but that I loved this noble knight Sir Launcelot out of measure, and of myself, good Lord, I might not withstand the fervent love wherefore I have my death. And then she called her father Sir Bernard, and her brother Sir Tirre, and heartily she prayed her father that her brother might write a letter like as she did endite it; and so her father granted her. And when the letter was written word by word like as she devised, then she prayed her father that she might be watched until she were dead, — And while my body is hot, let this letter be put in my right hand, and my hand bound fast with the letter until that I be cold, and let me be put in a fair bed, with all the richest clothes that I have about me, and so let my bed, and all my richest clothes, be laid with me in a chariot unto the next place where Thames is, and there let me be put within a barget, and but one man with me, such as ye trust to steer me thither, and that my barget be covered with black samite, over and over. Thus, father, I beseech you, let it be done. So her father granted it her faithfully, all things should be done like as she had devised. Then her father and her brother made great dole, for, when this was done, anon she died. And so when she was dead, the corpse, and the bed, all was led the next way unto Thames, and there a man, and the corpse, and all, were put into Thames, and so the man steered the barget unto West minster, and there he rowed a great while to and fro or any espied it"

1147. *Oar'd by the dumb.* Originally, "Steer'd by the dumb."

1167. *The shadow of some piece.* Originally, "of a piece."

1170. *Summer side.* Southern side.

1178. *Tawnier than her cygnet's.* The down of the cygnet, or young swan, is of a dusky hue.

1230. *In half disdain.* Originally, "half disgust."

1264. *Most noble lord*, etc. Cf. Malory (xviii. 20): "And this was the intent of the letter: — Most noble knight, Sir Launcelot, now hath death made us two at debate for your love; I was your lover, that men called the fair maiden of Astolat; therefore unto all ladies I make my moan; yet pray for my soul, and bury me at the least, and offer ye my mass-penny. This is my last request And a clean maiden I died, I take God to witness. Pray for my soul, Sir Launcelot, as thou art peerless. — This was all the substance in the letter. And when it was read the king, the queen, and all the knights wept for pity of the doleful complaints. Then was Sir Launcelot sent for. And when he was come, king Arthur made the letter to be read to him; and when Sir Launcelot heard it word by word, he said, My lord Arthur, wit ye well I am right heavy of the death of this fair damsel. God knoweth I was never causer of her death by my willing, and that will I report me to her own brother; here he is, Sir Lavaine. I will not say nay, said Sir Launcelot, but that she was both fair and good, and much I was beholden unto her, but she loved me out of measure. Ye might have shewed her, said the queen, some bounty and gentleness, that might have preserved her life. Madam, said Sir Launcelot, she would none other way be answered, but that she would be my wife, or else my love, and of these two I would not grant her; but I proffered her, for her

good love that she shewed me, a thousand pound yearly to her and to her heirs, and to wed any manner knight that she could find best to love in her heart. For, madam, said Sir Launcelot, I love not to be constrained to love; for love must arise of the heart, and not by no constraint. That is truth, said the king, and many knights: love is free in himself, and never will be bounden; for where he is bounden he loseth himself. Then said the king unto Sir Launcelot, It will be your worship that ye oversee that she be interred worshipfully. Sir, said Sir Launcelot, that shall be done as I can best devise. And so many knights went thither to behold that fair maiden. And so upon the morn she was interred richly, and Sir Launcelot offered her mass-penny, and all the knights of the Table Round that were there at that time offered with Sir Launcelot. And then the poor man went again with the barget. Then the queen sent for Sir Launcelot, and prayed him of mercy, for why she had been wroth with him causeless. This is not the first time, said Sir Launcelot, that ye have been displeased with me causeless; but, madam, ever I must suffer you, but what sorrow I endure I take no force."

1313. *Joyance.* Cf. Spenser, *F. Q.* iii. 12. 18: "She chearfull, fresh, and full of joyaunce glad."

1316. *To thy worship.* To thy honor. So *worshipfully*, in 1318, is honorably. Both are from Malory (see extract above).

1319. *That shrine*, etc. Westminster Abbey, or the ancient church on the same site. Cf. the quotation from Malory, in note on 1093 above.

1343. *But Arthur, who beheld*, etc. The 1859 ed. reads: —

> "But Arthur, who beheld his clouded brows,
> Approach'd him, and with full affection flung
> One arm about his neck, and spake and said,
> 'Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have
> Most love and most affiance,'" etc.

1346. *Affiance.* Trust, confidence. Cf. *Henry V.* ii. 2. 127: —

> "O, how hast thou with jealousy infected
> The sweetness of affiance!"

1354. *Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes.* For this line the 1859 ed. has: "For the wild people say wild things of thee."

1393. *Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake*, etc. The 1859 ed. reads: —

> "Lancelot, whom the Lady of the lake [*sic*]
> Stole from his mother — as the story runs —
> She chanted snatches of mysterious song," etc.

1418. *Not knowing he should die a holy man.* Malory (xxi. 9, 10) tells "how Sir Launcelot departed to seek the queen Guenever, and how he found her at Almesbury," and how she said to him: "Sir Launcelot, I require thee and beseech thee heartily, for all the love that ever was betwixt us, that thou never see me more in the visage; and I command thee on God's behalf, that thou forsake my company, and to thy kingdom thou turn again and keep well thy realm from war and wrack. For

as well as I have loved thee, mine heart will not serve me to see thee; for through thee and me is the flower of kings and knights destroyed."

He tells her that he had hoped to have her go with him to his own realm; but since she will not do this, he says to her: "I insure you faithfully I will ever take me to penance, and pray while my life lasteth, if that I may find any hermit either grey or white that will receive me. Wherefore, madam, I pray you kiss me, and never no more. Nay, said the queen, that shall I never do, but abstain you from such works. And they departed. But there never was so hard an hearted man, but he would have wept to see the dolour that they made. For there was lamentation as they had been stung with spears, and many times they swooned. And the ladies bare the queen to her chamber, and Sir Launcelot awoke, and went and took his horse, and rode all that day and all that night in a forest, weeping. And at the last he was ware of an hermitage and a chapel stood betwixt two cliffs, and then he heard a little bell ring to mass, and thither he rode and alight, and tied his horse to the gate, and heard mass. And he that sang mass was the bishop of Canterbury. Both the bishop and Sir Bedivere knew Sir Launcelot, and they spake together after mass. But when Sir Bedivere had told his tale all whole, Sir Launcelot's heart almost brast for sorrow, and Sir Launcelot threw his arms abroad, and said, Alas, who may trust this world! And then he kneeled down on his knees, and prayed the bishop to shrive him and assoil him. And then he besought the bishop that he might be his brother. Then the bishop said, I will gladly: and there he put an habit upon Sir Launcelot, and there he served God day and night with prayers and fastings." Later he learns of the death of Guinevere at Almesbury; and Malory (xxi. 12) says: "Then Sir Launcelot never after eat but little meat, nor drank, till he was dead; for then he sickened more and more, and dried and dwined away; for the bishop nor none of his fellows might not make him to eat, and little he drank, that he was waxen by a cubit shorter than he was, that the people could not know him; for evermore day and night he prayed, but sometime he slumbered a broken sleep, and ever he was lying groveling on the tomb of king Arthur and queen Guenever. And there was no comfort that the bishop, nor Sir Bors, nor none of his fellows could make him, it availed not. So within six weeks after, Sir Launcelot fell sick, and lay in his bed; and then he sent for the bishop that there was hermit, and all his true fellows. Then Sir Launcelot said with dreary voice, Sir bishop, I pray you give to me all my rights that longeth to a christian man. It shall not need you, said the hermit and all his fellows, it is but heaviness of your blood: ye shall be well amended by the grace of God to-morn. My fair lords, said Sir Launcelot, wit you well, my careful body will into the earth, I have warning more then I now will say, therefore give me my rights. So when he was houseled and eneled,[1] and had all that a christian man ought to have, he prayed the bishop that his fellows might bear his body to Joyous Gard. Some men say it was Anwick, and some men say it was Bamborow. Howbeit, said Sir Launcelot, me repenteth sore, but I made

[1] That is, had received the eucharist and extreme unction. Cf. *Hamlet*, i. 5. 77 "Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd."

mine avow sometime that in Joyous Gard I would be buried, and because of breaking of mine avow, I pray you all lead me thither. Then there was weeping and wringing of hands among his fellows." The next morning they "found him stark dead, and he lay as he had smiled, and the sweetest savour about him that ever they felt." His body was put "in the same horse bier that queen Guenever was laid in before that she was buried; and so the bishop and they altogether went with the corpse of Sir Launcelot daily till they came to Joyous Gard," where they "laid his corpse in the body of the quire, and read many psalters and prayers over him and about him."

THE HOLY GRAIL.

This Idyll was first printed, with other poems, in 1869. The changes in subsequent editions were few and slight.

The story is found in Malory, books xi. to xvii., *preceding* the story of Elaine in xviii. The poet follows his original closely here and there, but omits much that Malory gives and often varies from him.

This Idyll "marks the turn of the tide of Arthur's fortunes; the succeeding poems display the ebbing of his influence and authority still further, until that last scene, when all seems lost, and he departs for a time from a world unripe for regeneration."

15. *That puff'd the swaying branches into smoke.* For another allusion to the abundant pollen of the yew, scattered into *smoke* by the wind, see *In Memoriam*, xxxix.:—

> "Old warder of these buried bones,
> And answering now my random stroke
> With fruitful cloud and living smoke,
> Dark yew, that graspest at the stones," etc.

21. *Beyond the pale.* The limits of the monastery. Cf. Milton, *Il Penseroso*, 176: "To walk the studious cloister's pale," where some editors prefer to read "cloisters pale," making *pale* an adjective.

48. *The blessed land of Aromat.* "Aromat — a name suggestive of Sabæan spicery and sweet Eastern balms — is used for Arimathea, a town in Palestine, probably the modern Ramleh, and the home of the 'honorable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God,' Joseph, who placed Christ in the sepulchre that had been made for himself. The mediæval legend added that Joseph had received in the Grail the blood that flowed from the Saviour's side" (Littledale)

49. *When the dead*, etc. See *Matthew*, xxvii. 50 fol.

51. *Arimathæan Joseph.* Cf. *Balin and Balan*, 99, 358.

There is a variety of hawthorn which puts forth leaves and flowers about the time of Christmas. It is said to have originated at Glastonbury Abbey, and the original thorn was believed to have been the staff with which Joseph of Arimathea aided his steps on his wanderings from the Holy Land to Glastonbury, where he is said to have founded the celebrated Abbey. The first church, according to the legend, was "built of wattles" and interwoven twigs. In A. D. 439 St. Patrick is

said to have visited the place, and to have founded the monastery, of which he became the abbot. In 542 King Arthur was buried here. The abbey was several times repaired and rebuilt before the reign of Henry II., when it was destroyed by fire, and the large and splendid structure, the ruins of which still remain, was erected. It was the wealthiest abbey in England, except Westminster.

61. *Arviragus.* According to the mythical history, he was king of the Britons from the time of the invasion of Claudius to the reign of Vespasian. In Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* he is one of the sons of the king.

80. *And the strange sound*, etc. Cf. *Guinevere*, 483 fol.

88. *A hundred winters old.* Cf. *The Palace of Art*, 139: "A hundred winters snow'd upon his breast."

135. *Galahad.* Cf. Tennyson's poem of *Sir Galahad.* In the *Morte Darthur* (xiii. 3), he is described as "in red arms."

138. *In so young youth.* The romances make him only fifteen at the time.

149. *But she, the wan sweet maiden, shore away*, etc. Cf. Malory (xvii. 7): "Fair sir, said Percivale's sister, dismay you not, for by the leave of God I shall let make a girdle to the sword, such one as shall belong thereto. And then she opened a box, and took out girdles which were seemly wrought with golden threads, and upon that were set full precious stones, and a rich buckle of gold. Lo lords, said she, here is a girdle that ought to be set about the sword. And wit ye well the greatest part of this girdle was made of my hair, which I loved well while that I was a woman of the world. But as soon as I wist that this adventure was ordained me, I clipped off my hair and made this girdle in the name of God. Ye be well found, said Sir Bors, for certes you have put us out of great pain, wherein we should have entered ne had your tidings been. Then went the gentlewoman and set it on the girdle of the sword. Now, said the fellowship, what is the name of the sword, and what shall we call it? Truly, said she, the name of the sword is, the sword with the strange girdles, and the sheath, mover of blood; for no man that hath blood in him shall never see the one part of the sheath which was made of the tree of life. Then they said to Galahad, In the name of Jesu Christ, and pray you that ye gird you with this sword, which hath been desired so much in the realm of Logris. Now let me begin, said Galahad, to gripe this sword for to give you courage: but wit ye well it belongeth no more to me then it doth to you. And then he griped about it with his fingers a great deal. And then she girt him about the middle with the sword: — Now reck I not though I die, for now I hold me one of the blessed maidens of the world, which hath made the worthiest knight of the world. Damsel, said Galahad, ye have done so much that I shall be your knight all the days of my life."

It should be noted that all this occurs, not in connection with this part of the history of the quest for the Holy Grail, but later among incidents not used by Tennyson. Galahad finds a sword which no man could draw from the sheath except the one for whom it was destined. Galahad is the fated knight, and becomes its possessor. Then follows the story of the girdle quoted above.

168. *Ere he past away.* See vol. i. p. 213.

172. *The Siege Perilous.* The Perilous Seat. For *siege* = seat, cf. *Measure for Measure*, iv. 2. 101: "Upon the very siege of justice." Malory uses the word in this sense in iii. 2: "Then the bishop of Canterbury was fetched, and he blessed the sieges with great royalty and devotion, and there set the eight and twenty knights in their sieges." See also iii. 4: "What is the cause, said king Arthur, that there be two places void in the sieges? Sir, said Merlin, there shall no man sit in those places but they that shall be of most worship. But in the Siege Perilous there shall no man sit therein but one, and if there be any so hardy to do it he shall be destroyed, and he that shall sit there shall have no fellow."

176. *And so was lost.* This is not according to Malory or any other form of the story that we have seen; and Tennyson has given us a different version of Merlin's fate in *Merlin and Vivien*. Littledale says that 'Tennyson plainly intends the chair to signify the temptations of 'sense.' Merlin himself once yielded to these and was lost." Elsdale (*Studies in the Idylls*) says: "In our poet's rendering of the story we are, I presume, intended to understand the chair to represent allegorically the chair of *knowledge*. It is fashioned by Merlin, who symbolizes the powers of Intellect and Imagination, and it may be taken as the product of his lifelong researches and superhuman insight. . . . The chair is perilous for good and ill, because the acquisition of knowledge involves increased capacities and responsibilities, whether for good or for evil. For whoever sits in the chair cannot remain as he was before. He must go forward to a higher perfection or backward to deeper failure. In either case he loses his old self: — 'No man could sit but he should lose himself.' Merlin sat in it and was lost, because his discernment of Vivien's guile was unaccompanied by sufficient moral reprobation and firmness of will to prevent him from falling into her snare."

But the sitting in the chair and the adventure with Vivien are separate incidents in the story; and we cannot see how one of these can symbolize the other. Each must have its own interpretation as a part of the allegory. They may represent similar experiences, but not one and the same experience. Perhaps, as Littledale suggests, the knights, not knowing the real fate of Merlin, "thought that he had disappeared through sitting in the Siege Perilous."

182. *And all at once, as there we sat*, etc. Cf. Malory (xiii. 7): "And every knight sat in his own place as they were toforehand. Then anon they heard cracking and crying of thunder, that them thought that the place should all to-drive. In the midst of this blast entered a sun-beam more clearer by seven times than ever they saw day, and all they were alighted of the grace of the Holy Ghost. Then began every knight to behold other, and either saw other by their seeming fairer than ever they saw afore. Not for then there was no knight might speak one word a great while, and so they looked every man on other, as they had been dumb. Then there entered into the hall the holy Graile covered with white samite, but there was none might see it, nor who bare it. And there was all the hall full filled with good odours, and every knight

had such meats and drinks as he best loved in this world: and when the holy Graile had been borne through the hall, then the holy vessel departed suddenly, that they wist not where it became. Then had they all breath to speak. And then the king yielded thankings unto God of his good grace that he had sent them. Certes, said the king, we ought to thank our Lord Jesu greatly, for that he hath showed us this day at the reverence of this high feast of Pentecost. Now, said Sir Gawaine, we have been served this day of what meats and drinks we thought on, but one thing beguiled us, we might not see the holy Graile, it was so preciously covered: wherefore I will make here avow, that to-morn, without longer abiding, I shall labour in the quest of the Sancgreal, that I shall hold me out a twelvemonth and a day, or more if need be, and never shall I return again unto the court till I have seen it more openly than it hath been seen here: and if I may not speed, I shall return again as he that may not be against the will of our Lord Jesu Christ. When they of the Table Round heard Sir Gawaine say so, they arose up the most party, and made such avows as Sir Gawaine had made.

"Anon as king Arthur heard this he was greatly displeased, for he wist well that they might not againsay their avows. Alas! said king Arthur unto Sir Gawaine, ye have nigh slain me with the avow and promise that ye have made. For through you ye have bereft me of the fairest fellowship and the truest of knighthood that ever were seen together in any realm of the world. For when they depart from hence, I am sure they all shall never meet more in this world, for they shall die many in the quest. And so it forethinketh me a little, for I have loved them as well as my life, wherefore it shall grieve me right sore the departition of this fellowship. For I have had an old custom to have them in my fellowship."

209. *Crying on help.* Cried out, gave the cry for help. Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, v. 5. 35: "crying on Hector;" *Hamlet*, v. 2. 375: "cries on havoc," etc. See also 433 below.

250. *The twelve great battles.* Cf. *Launcelot and Elaine*, 285 fol.

254. *Counter.* Opposite. Cf. vol. i. p. 199.

256. *O there, perchance.* The 1869 ed. has "then" for *there*.

287. *What go ye into the wilderness to see?* Cf. *Matthew*, xi. 7.

298. *But ye that follow but the leader's bell.* Like a flock of sheep. The 1869 ed. has "you" for *ye*.

300. *Taliessin.* The name means "the radiant brow." He was the prince of British singers, and flourished in the seventh century (Littledale). Compare Gray, *The Bard:* "Hear from the grave, great Taliessin, hear!"

310. *Sudden heads of violence.* Sudden insurrections.

312. *The strong White Horse.* See on *Launcelot and Elaine*, 298.

318. *This chance of noble deeds.* Originally, "The chance," etc.

350. *On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan.* Heraldic devices. For *wyvern*, a dragon-like creature, cf. *Aylmer's Field:* "Whose blazing wyvern weathercock'd the spire," etc.

352. *But in the ways below.* The 1869 ed. has "street" for *ways*: and in 355 it reads: "For sorrow, and in the middle street the Queen."

358. *So to the gate*, etc. The 1869 ed. has: —

"And then we reach'd the weirdly-sculptured gates
Where Arthur's wars were render'd mystically."

421. *And I rode on.* The 1869 ed. has "And on I rode" (cf. 379 and 401 above), and in the preceding line "wearied" for *wearying*.

433. *Cried out upon me.* The 1869 ed. omits *out* — probably a misprint.

462. *The sacring of the mass.* The consecration of the bread and wine for the mass. The expression is from Malory (xvii. 20): "And then the bishop made semblant as though he would have gone to the sacring of the mass. And then he took an ubbly [sacramental cake], which was made in likeness of bread; and at the lifting up there came a figure in likeness of a child, and the visage was as red and as bright as any fire, and smote himself into the bread, so that they all saw it, that the bread was formed of a fleshly man, and then he put it into the holy vessel again."

489. *There rose a hill.* Originally, "Then rose a hill."

Stopford Brooke remarks: "In conception, in invention, in description of invented landscape, and in artistic work, this passing of Galahad is splendidly written. It is too long to quote in full, too knit together to be spoiled by extracts, and too poetic to criticise. It is its own best criticism.

"This great and lofty vision of the glory of the pure spiritual life, refined and thrilled by heavenly holiness into full vision with the world beyond the sense, and needing no death to enter into the perfect life, is done as no one has done this kind of work since Dante."

509. *Shoutings of all the sons of God.* Cf. *Job*, xxxviii. 7.

526. *The spiritual city*, etc. Cf. *Revelation*, xxi. 10 fol.

558. *The market-cross.* A common feature of the market-place in English towns in the olden time, and still to be seen in some localities. Cf. *1 Henry IV.* v. 1. 73: "Proclaim'd at market-crosses, read in churches," etc.

574. *Thither I made.* Originally, "Whither I made."

612. *When yule is cold.* When the yule-log is burnt out, or when Christmas has passed. The poor man must have his blazing fire then, if he can afford it at no other time.

628. *In his earth.* In his hole. Cf. *The Marriage of Geraint*, 215.

646. *His former madness.* How Lancelot became mad because Guinevere was angry with him when she believed him to be in love with Elaine, daughter of King Pelles (not the fair maid of Astolat), is told by Malory (xi. 9); and also, how, after two years, he was healed by the Holy Grail (xii. 4).

648. *For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship him.* The 1869 ed. reads: For Lancelot's kith and kin adore him so."

661. *Paynim amid their circles.* Pagans living among the so-called Druidical circles, like that at Stonehenge.

667. *What other fire than he*, etc. That is, the sun, which they worship.

681. *The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table Round.* The seven stars of the Great Bear, or "the Dipper" as it is called in New England.

715. *Basilisks.* The fabulous serpent supposed to kill by its look. The *cockatrice* was a similar creature, sometimes identified with the

basilisk. Both were used as heraldic emblems; and so were *talbots*, a kind of dog. Cf. 350 above.

735. *The quiet life.* Cf. 4 above: "the silent life of prayer."

759. *Like him of Cana*, etc. See *John*, ii. 10.

777. *Then I spake*, etc. Cf. Malory (xiii. 19, 20): "And so by prime he came to an high hill, and found an hermitage, and an hermit therein, which was going unto mass. And then Launcelot kneeled down and cried on our Lord mercy for his wicked works. So when mass was done, Launcelot called him, and prayed him for charity for to hear his life. With a good will, said the good man. Sir, said he, be ye of king Arthur's court, and of the fellowship of the Round Table? Yea forsooth, and my name is Sir Launcelot du Lake, that hath been right well said of, and now my good fortune is changed, for I am the most wretch of the world. The hermit beheld him, and had marvel how he was so abashed. Sir, said the hermit, ye ought to thank God more than any knight living; for He hath caused you to have more worldly worship than any knight that now liveth. And for your presumption to take upon you in deadly sin for to be in His presence, where His flesh and His blood was, that caused you ye might not see it with worldly eyes, for He will not appear where such sinners be, but if it be unto their great hurt, and unto their great shame. And there is no knight living now that ought to give God so great thanks as ye; for He hath given you beauty, seemliness, and great strength, above all other knights, and therefore ye are the more beholding unto God than any other man to love Him and dread Him; for your strength and manhood will little avail you and God be against you.

"Then Sir Launcelot wept with heavy cheer, and said, Now I know well ye say me sooth. Sir, said the good man, hide none old sin from me. Truly, said Sir Launcelot, that were me full loth to discover. For this fourteen years I never discovered one thing that I have used, and that may I now blame my shame and my misadventure. And then he told there that good man all his life, and how he had loved a queen unmeasurably, and out of measure long; — and all my great deeds of arms that I have done, I did the most part for the queen's sake, and for her sake would I do battle were it right or wrong, and never did I battle all only for God's sake, but for to win worship, and to cause me to be the better beloved, and little or nought I thanked God of it. Then Sir Launcelot said, I pray you counsel me. I will counsel you, said the hermit, if ye will ensure me that ye will never come in that queen's fellowship, as much as ye may forbear. And then Sir Launcelot promised him he would not, by the faith of his body."

792. *But such a blast*, etc. Cf. Malory (xvii. 14): "And the wind arose, and drove Launcelot more than a month throughout the sea, where he slept but little, but prayed to God that he might see some tidings of the Sancgreal. So it befell on a night, at midnight he arrived before a castle, on the back side, which was rich and fair. And there was a postern opened towards the sea, and was open without any keeping, save two lions kept the entry; and the moon shone clear. Anon Sir Launcelot heard a voice that said, Launcelot, go out of this ship, and enter into the castle, where thou shalt see a great part of thy desire. Then he ran to his

arms, and so armed him, and so he went to the gate, and saw the lions. Then set he hand to his sword, and drew it. Then there came a dwarf suddenly, and smote him on the arm so sore that the sword fell out of his hand. Then heard he a voice say, Oh man of evil faith and poor belief, wherefore trowest thou more on thy harness than in thy Maker? for He might more avail thee than thine armour, in whose service thou art set. Then said Launcelot, Fair Father, Jesu Christ, I thank thee of thy great mercy, that thou reprovest me of my misdeed. Now see I well that ye hold me for your servant. Then took he again his sword, and put it up in his sheath, and made a cross in his forehead, and came to the lions, and they made semblant to do him harm. Notwithstanding he passed by them without hurt, and entered into the castle to the chief fortress, and there were they all at rest. Then Launcelot entered in so armed, for he found no gate nor door but it was open. And at the last he found a chamber whereof the door was shut, and he set his hand thereto to have opened it, but he might not."

Stopford Brooke says of this part of the poem: "Its basis is to be found in the old tale; but whoever reads it in Malory's *Morte Darthur* will see how imaginatively it has been re-conceived. It is full of the true romantic element; it is close to the essence of the story of the Holy Grail; there is nothing in the *Idylls* more beautiful in vision and in sound; and the art with which it is worked is as finished as the conception is majestic."

810. *The enchanted towers of Carbonek.* The name is from Malory (xvii. 16). After Lancelot had lain "four and twenty days, and also many nights, . . . still as a dead man," he recovered from the long swoon. "Then they asked him how it stood with him. Forsooth, said he, I am whole of body, thanked be our Lord; therefore, sirs, for God's love, tell me where that I am? Then said they all that he was in the castle of Carbonek."

862. *Deafer than the blue-eyed cat.* Cf. Darwin, *Origin of Species*, chap. i.: "Thus cats which are entirely white and have blue eyes are generally deaf: but it has lately been pointed out by Mr. Tait that this is confined to the males."

877. *Nay, but thou errest*, etc. He reverts to what Lancelot had said in 766 fol.

895. *The silent life.* Cf. 4 and 735 above.

898. *However they may crown him otherwhere.* Cf. 482 above.

899. *And some among you*, etc. Cf. 277 above.

PELLEAS AND ETTARRE.

This Idyll was first published in 1869 in the *Holy Grail* volume, and has been little altered since, except for the insertion of seventeen lines (386–403). The story is from Malory (iv. 20–23), but many of the details are modified and the *dénoûment* is changed.

20. *The forest called of Dean.* The triangular district between the Wye and the Severn, as far north as a line drawn from Ross to Gloucester, was formerly a royal domain; and the crown lands still amount to

about 25,000 acres. It is now largely a mining district, producing great quantities of coal and iron, but there are also extensive tracts of woodland.

29. *That dim day.* The "twilight of the grove" (32).

65. *Pelleas gazing thought.* The ed. of 1869 has "And Pelleas," etc.

113. *He will fight for me.* The construction is changed from the third person to the first, as occasionally elsewhere, in a free-and-easy archaic fashion.

234. *Donjon.* The "donjon tower" or "keep" of the castle. Cf. *Balin and Balan*, 329, etc.

266. *And Gawain passing by*, etc. Malory (iv. 20) tells this part of the story thus: "And . . . Sir Gawaine saw ten knights that hoved still, and made them ready with their shields and spears against that one knight that came by Sir Gawaine. Then this one knight aventred a great spear, and one of the ten knights encountered with him, but this woful knight smote him so hard that he fell over his horse tail. So this same dolorous knight served them all, that at the least way he smote down horse and man, and all he did with one spear. And so when they were all ten on foot they went to that one knight, and he stood stone still, and suffered them to pull him down off his horse, and bound him hand and foot, and tied him under the horse belly, and so led him with them. Oh, said Sir Gawaine, this is a doleful sight, to see the yonder knight so to be entreated, and it seemeth by the knight that he suffereth them to bind him so, for he maketh no resistance. No, said his host, that is truth, for and [if] he would they all were too weak so to do him."

Later, when Gawaine has been told the story of the love of Pelleas for Ettarre and her disdainful treatment of the knight, the narrative goes on as follows (iv. 21): "Alas! said Sir Gawaine, it is great pity of him, and after this night I will seek him to-morrow in this forest, to do him all the help that I can. So on the morn Sir Gawaine took his leave of his host Sir Carados, and rode into the forest. And at the last he met with Sir Pelleas making great moan out of measure, so each of them saluted other, and asked him why he made such sorrow. And as it is above rehearsed, Sir Pelleas told Sir Gawaine: But alway I suffer her knights to fare so with me as ye saw yesterday, in trust at the last to win her love, for she knoweth well all her knights should not lightly win me and me list to fight with them to the uttermost. Wherefore I loved her not so sore I had lever die an hundred times, and I might die so oft rather than I would suffer that despite; but I trust she will have pity upon me at the last, for love causeth many a good knight to suffer to have his intent, but, alas! I am unfortunate. And therewith he made so great dole and sorrow that unnethe he might hold him on horseback. Now, said Sir Gawaine, leave your mourning, and I shall promise you by the faith of my body, to do all that lieth in my power to get you the love of your lady, and thereto I will plight you my troth. Ah, said Sir Pelleas, of what court are ye? tell me, I pray you, my good friend. And then Sir Gawaine said, I am of the court of king Arthur, and his sister's son, and king Lot of Orkney was my father, and my name is Sir Gawaine. And then he said, My name is Sir Pelleas, born in the Isles, and of many isles I am lord, and never have I loved lady nor damsel till

now in an unhappy time; and Sir knight, since ye are so nigh cousin unto king Arthur, and a king's son, therefore betray me not but help me, for I may never come by her but by some good knight, for she is in a strong castle here fast by within this four mile, and over all this country she is lady of. And so I may never come to her presence but as I suffer her knights to take me, and but if I did so that I might have a sight of her, I had been dead long or this time, and yet fair word had I never of her, but when I am brought tofore her she rebuketh me in the foulest manner. And then they take my horse and harness, and put me out of the gates, and she will not suffer me to eat nor drink, and always I offer me to be her prisoner, but that she will not suffer me, for I would desire no more what pains soever I had, so that I might have a sight of her daily. Well, said Sir Gawaine, all this shall I amend, and ye will do as I shall devise. .I will have your horse and your armour, and so will I ride to her castle, and tell her that I have slain you, and so shall I come within her to cause her to cherish me, and then shall I do my true part that ye shall not fail to have the love of her."

278. *Shivers.* One of the many illustrations of the poet's keen observation of animals.

306. *Laugh'd not.* A subtle touch.

341. *From prime to vespers.* From morning to night. *Prime* is one of the seven canonical hours, coming immediately after sunrise.

342. *Prowest knight.* Bravest, first in *prowess.* Cf. Spenser, *F. Q.* ii. 3. 15: "For they be two the prowest knights on ground."

350. *Then Pelleas lent his horse,* etc. Cf. Malory (iv. 22): "And therewith Sir Gawaine plight his troth unto Sir Pelleas to be true and faithful unto him. So each one plight their troth to other, and so they changed horses and harness, and Sir Gawaine departed and came to the castle whereas stood the pavilions of this lady without the gate. And as soon as Ettard had espied Sir Gawaine she fled in toward the castle. Sir Gawaine spake on high, and bad her abide, for he was not Sir Pelleas; I am another knight that hath slain Sir Pelleas. Do off your helm, said the lady Ettard, that I may see your visage. And so when she saw that it was not Sir Pelleas she made him alight, and led him unto her castle, and asked him faithfully whether he had slain Sir Pelleas. And he said her yea, and told her his name was Sir Gawaine of the court of king Arthur, and his sister's son. Truly, said she, that is great pity, for he was a passing good knight of his body, but of all men on live I hated him most, for I could never be quit of him. And for ye have slain him I shall be your lady, and to do anything that may please you. So she made Sir Gawaine good cheer. Then Sir Gawaine said that he loved a lady, and by no mean she would love him. She is to blame, said Ettard, and she will not love you, for ye that be so well born a man, and such a man of prowess, there is no lady in the world too good for you. Will ye, said Sir Gawaine, promise me to do all that ye may, by the faith of your body, to get me the love of my lady? Yea, sir, said she, and that I promise you by the faith of my body. Now, said Sir Gawaine, it is yourself that I love so well, therefore I pray you hold your promise. I may not choose, said the lady Ettard, but if I should be forsworn. And so she granted him to fulfil all his desire.

"So it was then in the month of May that she and Sir Gawaine went out of the castle and supped in a pavilion, and in another pavilion she laid her damsels, and in the third pavilion she laid part of her knights, for then she had no dread of Sir Pelleas. And there Sir Gawaine abode with her in that pavilion two days and two nights. And on the third day in the morning early Sir Pelleas armed him, for he had never slept since Sir Gawaine departed from him. For Sir Gawaine had promised him, by the faith of his body, to come to him unto his pavilion by that priory within the space of a day and a night. Then Sir Pelleas mounted upon horseback, and came to the pavilions that stood without the castle, and found in the first pavilion three knights in three beds, and three squires lying at their feet. Then went he to the second pavilion and found four gentlewomen lying in four beds. And then he went to the third pavilion and found Sir Gawaine with his lady Ettard, and when he saw that his heart well nigh burst for sorrow, and said: Alas! that ever a knight should be found so false. And then he took his horse, and might not abide no longer for pure sorrow. And when he had ridden nigh half a mile, he turned again and thought to slay them both; and when he saw them both sleeping fast, unnethe he might hold him on horseback for sorrow, and said thus to himself, Though this knight be never so false I will never slay him sleeping; for I will never destroy the high order of knighthood. And therewith he departed again. And or he had ridden half a mile he returned again, and thought then to slay them both, making the greatest sorrow that ever man made. And when he came to the pavilions he tied his horse to a tree, and pulled out his sword naked in his hand, and went to them there as they lay, and yet he thought it were shame to slay them sleeping, and laid the naked sword overthwart both their throats, and so took his horse and rode his way."

353. *Light-of-love.* Trifling or capricious in love. The expression is at least as old as the time of Shakespeare, who twice refers to a tune so called. Cf. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, i. 2. 82: "Best sing it to the tune of 'Light-o'-love.'" See also *Much Ado*, iii. 4. 44.

379. *And you be fair enow.* The 1869 ed. has "ye" for *you*.

380–404. *Hot was the night . . . bound his horse*, etc. For these nineteen lines the ed. of 1869 has only these two: —

> "The night was hot: he could not rest but rode
> Ere midnight to her walls, and bound his horse," etc.

409. *Then he crost the court*, etc. The 1869 ed. reads: —

> "Then he crost the court,
> And saw the postern portal also wide
> Yawning; and up a slope of garden, all
> Of roses white and red, and wild ones mixt," etc.

419. *Then was he ware*, etc. The 1869 ed. reads: —

> "Then was he ware that white pavilions rose,
> Three from the bushes, gilden-peakt."

421. *Her lurdane knights.* Her stupid, worthless knights. *Lurdane* (really from the Old French *lourdin*, dull, blockish, from *lourd*) was

supposed by some of our old authors to be a corruption of "lord Dane," formed in derision of the Danes. It was used as both adjective and noun. Compare the *Mirror for Magistrates* : —

> "In every house *lord Dane* did then rule all,
> Whence laysie lozels *lurdanes* now we call."

455. *Huge, solid*, etc. The 1869 ed. has "So solid," etc.

456. *The crack of earthquake*. See on *Merlin and Vivien*, 940 (vol. i. p. 218).

471. *O great and sane and simple race of brutes*, etc. Cf. *In Memoriam*, xxiii. : —

> "I envy not the beast that takes
> His license in the field of time,
> Unfetter'd by the sense of crime,
> To whom a conscience never wakes."

478. *Then she, that felt the cold touch*, etc. Cf. Malory (iv. 20): "Then Sir Gawaine and Ettard awoke out of their sleep, and found the naked sword overthwart their throats. Then she knew well it was Sir Pelleas's sword. Alas! said she to Sir Gawaine, ye have betrayed me and Sir Pelleas both, for ye told me ye had slain him, and now I know well it is not so, he is on live. And if Sir Pelleas had been as uncourteous to you as ye have been to him, ye had been a dead knight; but ye have deceived me and betrayed me falsely, that all ladies and damsels may beware by you and me. And therewith Sir Gawaine made him ready and went into the forest."

At this point the poet deserts his authority; but the reader, if he has not the *Morte Darthur* at hand, may be interested in the conclusion of the story as there given: "So it happed then that the damsel of the lake Nimue met with a knight of Sir Pelleas, that went on his foot in the forest making great dole, and she asked him the cause. And so the woful knight told her how that his master and lord was betrayed through a knight and a lady, and how he will never arise out of his bed till he be dead. Bring me to him, said she, anon, and I will warrant his life, he shall not die for love, and she that hath caused him so to love she shall be in as evil plight as he is or it be long, for it is no joy of such a proud lady that will have no mercy of such a valiant knight. Anon that knight brought her unto him. And when she saw him lie in his bed, she thought she saw never so likely a knight: and therewith she threw an enchantment upon him, and he fell on sleep. And therewhile she rode unto the lady Ettard, and charged no man to awake him till she came again. So within two hours she brought the lady Ettard thither, and both ladies found him on sleep. Lo, said the damsel of the lake, ye ought to be ashamed for to murder such a knight. And therewith she threw such an enchantment upon her that she loved him sore, that well nigh she was out of her mind. Alas! said the lady Ettard, how is it befallen unto me that I love now him that I have most hated of any men alive. That is the righteous judgment of God, said the damsel. And then anon Sir Pelleas awaked, and looked upon Ettard. And when he saw her he knew her, and then he hated her more than any

woman alive, and said: Away traitress, come never in my sight. And when she heard him say so, she wept and made great sorrow out of measure. Sir knight Pelleas, said the damsel of the lake, take your horse and come forth with me out of this country, and ye shall love a lady that shall love you. I will well, said Sir Pelleas, for this lady Ettard hath done me great despite and shame. And there he told her the beginning and ending, and how he had purposed never to have arisen till that he had been dead, — and now I hate her as much as ever I loved her. Thank me, said the damsel of the lake. Anon Sir Pelleas armed him, and took his horse, and commanded his men to bring after his pavilions and his stuff where the damsel of the lake would assign. So the lady Ettard died for sorrow, and the damsel of the lake rejoiced Sir Pelleas, and loved together during their life days."

490. *The star above the wakening sun.* The morning star. Cf. 508 below.

515. *Mazed with dreams.* Bewildered by them. Cf. *Gareth and Lynette*, 1141: "Hast mazed my wit;" and see note in vol. i. p. 202.

538. *The turning of the world.* The rotation of the earth, which brings the night. Cf. another allusion to the same astronomical phenomenon in the lines: "Move eastward, happy earth, and leave," etc.

543. *The dead-green stripes of even.* An accurate picture of a certain kind of evening sky.

553. '*No name, no name.*' The 1869 ed. reads: "I have no name."

560. *Yell'd the youth.* Originally, "yell'd the other."

565. *Yea, between thy lips — and sharp.* Littledale remarks: "The metaphor of the slanderous tongue, that sharp weapon between the lips, is no doubt nearly as old as the human race itself: 'the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword' (*Psalm* lvii. 4). Cf. *Cymbeline*, iii. 4. 35: —

> "'T is slander,
> Whose edge is sharper than the sword, whose tongue
> Outvenoms all the worms of Nile.'"

594. *And all talk died*, etc. Cf. *Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere*: —

> "Sometimes the sparhawk wheel'd along
> Hush'd all the groves for fear of wrong."

THE LAST TOURNAMENT.

This Idyll was first published in the *Contemporary Review* for December, 1871. The changes made in it since have been slight.

The outline of the story of Tristram and his two Isolts and the vengeance of Mark is taken from Malory, but the rest is Tennyson's own.

Littledale gives the following abstract of the Tristram story: —

"Tristram, having been wounded by an Irish spear, can only be healed by an Irish hand, so he goes to Ireland, and is treated by La Beale Isoud or Isolt, daughter of the Irish king. On his return he gives a glowing description of her to his uncle Mark, who sends him back as his envoy to ask for her hand. On the voyage from Ireland

they innocently drink the potent philtre, and their fatal love for each other begins. Long after, when the effects of the philtre have become exhausted, Tristram is hurt by a poisoned arrow, and goes to Brittany to be cured by King Hoel's daughter, Isolt of the White Hands (Isoud la blanche Maynys), whom he loves and marries. Lancelot reproaches him for his inconstancy to La Beale Isoud, and the lady herself writes sadly to him. Tristram's old love revives, and he resolves to go to Cornwall to see his old love. There is a quarrel, and Tristram reproaches Isolt for her unfaithfulness to him. He goes mad, and throws Dagonet into a well. After many adventures Arthur knights him, and he runs away with Isolt, but is wounded in a tournament. Mark undertakes to nurse him, which he does by putting him into a dungeon. Tristram and Isolt again escape, and live in Lancelot's castle of Joyous Gard; he goes out riding with Isolt, both of them being clad in green attire, when probably the bower mentioned by Tennyson is constructed. He fights with many knights; but we need not go into the rest of his story, of which enough has been given to show its affinity to the Lancelot story, and to illustrate the love-scene with Isolt in the Idyll. We may, however, quote Malory's last words about them: 'That traitor king Mark slew the noble knight Sir Tristram, as he sat harping before his lady La Beale Isoud, with a trenchant glaive, for whose death was much bewailing of every knight that ever was in Arthur's days . . . and La Beale Isoud died, swooning upon the cross of Sir Tristram, whereof was great pity.'"

10. *For Arthur and Sir Lancelot*, etc. The poet seems to have based his story of the ruby necklace on an incident in the life of Alfred, quoted in Stanley's *Book of Birds*, where it is credited to the *Monast. Anglic.* vol. i.: "Alfred, King of the West Saxons, went out one day a-hunting, and passing by a certain wood heard, as he supposed, the cry of an infant from the top of a tree, and forthwith diligently inquiring of the huntsmen what that doleful sound could be, commanded one of them to climb the tree, when on the top of it was found an eagle's nest, and lo! therein, a sweet-faced infant, wrapped up in a purple mantle, and upon each arm a bracelet of gold, a clear sign that he was born of noble parents. Whereupon the king took charge of him, and caused him to be baptized; and, because he was found in a nest, he gave him the name of *Nestingum*, and, in aftertime, having nobly educated him, he advanced him to the dignity of an earl."

37. *Those diamonds*, etc. See *Lancelot and Elaine*, 34 fol.

39. *Would rather you had let them fall.* Originally, "ye" for *you*.

51. *A great jousts.* This use of *jousts* in the singular is peculiar, and is not mentioned in the dictionaries.

90. *Tend him curiously.* That is, *carefully*, the etymological sense of the word.

92. *That ever-climbing wave.* Cf. *The Lotos Eaters:* "In ever climbing up the climbing wave."

116. *A sound is in his ears.* See *Job*, xv. 21.

132. *Where is he who knows?* etc. See *The Coming of Arthur*, 409, 410.

144. *His double-dragon'd chair.* See *Lancelot and Elaine*, 434 fol.

150. *Vail'd his eyes again.* Cast down his eyes. Cf. *Guinevere*, 657: "made her vail her eyes." This word *vail* has no connection with *veil*, though often confounded with it. It is contracted from *avail*, or *avale*, the French *avaler* (Latin *ad vallem*). Compare *Hamlet*, i. 2. 70: —

> "Do not forever with thy vailed lids
> Seek for thy noble father in the dust."

Avail occurs in Malory (v. 12): "Then the King availed his visor, with a meek and lowly countenance," etc.

216. *A swarthy one.* Originally, "a swarthy dame."

222. *Come — let us gladden their sad eyes.* Originally, "comfort their sad eyes."

252. *And while he twangled*, etc. Littledale says that "Dagonet's standing still is doubtless meant to recall *St. Matthew*, xi. 17: 'We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced,' etc." It may or may not remind us of that passage, but we doubt whether it was "meant" to do so.

256. *And being ask'd*, etc. Originally, "Then being ask'd," etc.

259. *Than any broken music thou canst make.* Originally, "ye can make." "Properly speaking, *broken music* meant either (as Chappell explains) short unsustained notes, such as are made on stringed instruments when played without a bow; or concerted music, played by several instruments in combination" (Littledale). For the play upon the expression, see *As You Like It*, i. 2. 150, *Henry V.* v. 2. 263, and *Troilus and Cressida*, iii. 1. 52.

278. *New leaf, new life*, etc. Cf. *The Throstle:* "Light again, leaf again, life again, love again."

309. *A naked aught.* A mere cipher.

322. *A Paynim harper.* The allusion to Orpheus needs no explanation.

333. *The Harp of Arthur.* See on *Gareth and Lynette*, 1281 (vol. i. p. 203).

343. *The black king's highway.* The "broad road leading to destruction."

357. *Burning spurge.* A plant of the genus *Euphorbia*, which burns with an acrid smoke.

371. *The slot or fewmets of a deer.* "*Slot* and *fewmets* (footprints and droppings) are old terms of 'venerie,' or woodcraft" (Littledale).

373 *From lawn to lawn.* For *lawn* as an open place in a forest, cf. *A Dream of Fair Women:* —

> "On those long, rank, dark wood-walks drench'd in dew,
> Leading from lawn to lawn."

Malory (iv. 19) has the word in this sense: "So on the morn they rode into the forest of adventure till they came to a lawn, and thereby they found a cross."

392. *Tonguesters.* The word, which may be the poet's own, occurs again in *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, 130: "Thro' the tonguesters we may fall."

421. *Sallowy isle.* Covered with *sallows*, or willows.

423. *Machicolated.* Furnished with a projecting gallery, with openings in the floor for pouring down melted lead, etc., upon an enemy.

432. *In a field noir.* In a black field; the French *noir* being the heraldic term for the color.

450. *The scorpion-worm*, etc. A legendary creature, evidently suggested by the old notion (long since proved false by naturalists) that the scorpion, if surrounded by fire, will sting itself to death. The use of *worm* is suggested by the obsolete sense of snake, dragon, etc. Cf. *Measure for Measure*, iii. 1. 17 : —

> "For thou dost fear the soft and tender fork
> Of a poor worm."

It is in a similar sense that Venus (*Venus and Adonis*, 933) calls Death "grim-grinning ghost, earth's worm."

461. *Fall, as the crest*, etc. The elaborate simile seems out of keeping with the fall of the drunken knight from his horse; but it is an "Homeric echo," like not a few others in the Idylls.

467. *Then the knights*, etc. Originally, "while the knights," etc.

477. *Then, echoing yell with yell.* Originally, "Then, yell with yell echoing."

479. *Alioth and Alcor.* Stars in the Great Bear. Alcor is really a fifth-magnitude star close to Mizar, and distinguishable only by good eyes. For the reference to the Aurora borealis, cf. *The Passing of Arthur*, 307.

481. *As the water Moab saw*, etc. See *2 Kings*, iii. 22.

483. *And lazy-plunging sea.* Cf. *The Palace of Art* : —

> "that hears all night
> The plunging seas draw backward from the land
> Their moon-led waters white;"

and *A Dream of Fair Women* : —

> "I would the white cold heavy-plunging foam,
> Whirl'd by the wind, had roll'd me deep below,
> Then when I left my home."

495. *What, if she hate me now?* Originally, "an" for *if*, as also in the next line.

501. *Last in a roky hollow, belling*, etc. *Roky* (associated with *reek*) means misty, foggy. For *belling* as applied to hounds, cf. *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, iv. 1. 128 : —

> "Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,
> Each under each;"

that is, like a chime of bells.

502. *Felt the goodly hounds Yelp at his heart.* Littledale thinks this may mean that "the belling of the hounds set the hunter's heart throbbing in harmony — he longed to follow the chase, but turned aside to Tintagil;" but Elsdale's explanation, that it is a presentiment of coming disaster, is perhaps to be preferred.

504. *Tintagil.* The ruins of the castle are still to be seen "by the Cornish sea," six miles from Camelford. The keep, the oldest part of

the structure, is probably Norman, but there may have been a Saxon, and perhaps also a British, stronghold on the same site.

509. *The spiring stone.* The spiral stairway of stone. The dictionaries do not recognize this sense of *spiring*, but we have no doubt that it was what Tennyson had in mind, rather than rising as a spire.

542. *Ye twain had fallen out*, etc. Cf. Malory (viii. 13): "And then largely king Meliodas and his queen parted of their lands and goods to Sir Tristram. Then by the licence of king Meliodas his father he returned again unto the court of king Mark, and there he lived in great joy long time, until at the last there befel a jealousy and an unkindness between king Mark and Sir Tristram, for they loved both one lady, and she was an earl's wife, that hight Sir Segwarides. And this lady loved Sir Tristram passing well, and he loved her again, for she was a passing fair lady, and that espied Sir Tristram well. Then king Mark understood that, and was jealous, for king Mark loved her passingly well. So it fell upon a day, this lady sent a dwarf unto Sir Tristram, and bad him say that as he loved her that he would be with her the next day following. Also she charged you that ye come not to her but if ye be well armed, for her lover was called a good knight. Sir Tristram answered to the dwarf, Recommend me unto my lady, and tell her I will not fail but I will be with her the term that she hath set me. And with this answer the dwarf departed. And king Mark espied that the dwarf was with Sir Tristram, upon message from Sir Segwarides's wife; then king Mark sent for the dwarf. And when he was come he made the dwarf by force to tell him all, why and wherefore that he came on message to Sir Tristram. Now, said king Mark, go where thou wilt, and upon pain of death that thou say no word that thou spakest with me. So the dwarf departed from the king. And that same time that was set betwixt Sir Segwarides's wife and Sir Tristram, king Mark armed him, and made him ready, and took two knights of his council with him, and so he rode afore, for to abide by the way, to await upon Sir Tristram. And as Sir Tristram came riding upon his way, with his spear in his hand, king Mark came hurtling upon him with his two knights suddenly. And all three smote him with their spears, and king Mark hurt Sir Tristram on the breast right sore; and then Sir Tristram feutered his spear, and smote his uncle king Mark such a stroke that he rashed him to the earth, and bruised him that he lay still in a swoon, and it was long or he might move himself."

549. *Queen Paramount.* That is, Guinevere. *Paramount* in this official sense (preëminent, supreme) is always put after the noun; as *Lord Paramount*, etc. Cf. Blackstone, *Commentaries*, ii. 5: "the king, who is styled the lord paramount, or above all." This use is occasionally extended to other nouns, for the sake of emphasis. Thus Bacon has "a traitor paramount;" and Howells refers to the Redemption as a "blessing paramount," etc.

555. *My dole of beauty.* My portion or endowment.

570. *To sin in leading-strings.* Referring to what he has just said of the sin of Guinevere.

588. *The king was all fulfill'd with gratefulness.* For *fulfil* in the old sense of fill full, cf. Shakespeare, *Sonnet* 136. 5:—

"'Will' will fulfil the treasure of thy love.
Ay, fill it full with wills, and my will one."

Wiclif has in *Matthew*, v. 6: "Blessid be thei that hungren and thirsten rigtwisnesse; for thei schal be fulfillid."

594. *By whom all men Are noble.* Compared with whom all men, even the meanest, are noble.

627. *The swineherd's malkin in the mast.* Cf. *The Princess*, v.:—

"If this be he,—or a draggled mawkin thou,
That tends her bristled grunters in the sludge!"

Mawkin is only a phonetic spelling of *malkin*, which means a kitchen-wench or other female menial; as, in these passages, one who helps a swineherd take care of his hogs. Cf. Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, ii. 1. 224: "the kitchen malkin." The word is probably a diminutive of *Mall* (cf. *Twelfth Night*, i. 3. 135: "Mistress Mall's picture"), or *Mary;* but it was also connected with *Matilda*. The *Promptorium Parvulorum* has "Malkyne, or Mawt, proper name *Matildis*."

629. *Far other was the Tristram*, etc. This line is not in the 1st ed.

650. *Vows! did you keep*, etc. The 1st ed. has "ye" for *you*.

690. *The wide world laughs at it.* Originally "The great world," etc.

692. *The ptarmigan*, etc. "The color of this bird varies, being brownish-gray in summer and white in winter. The changes of plumage enable it to harmonize with its surroundings at the various seasons. If the ptarmigan's feathers were to turn white before the winter snows began, it would be seen by the eagle-owls and falcons, and would soon be killed" (Littledale).

695. *The garnet-headed yaffingale.* The green woodpecker, *Gecinus viridis;* so called from its loud laughing notes. It is also known as the *yaffle* (or *yaffil*) and *yaffler*.

712. *Press this a little closer.* That is, stop talking.

721. *The lawns.* See on 373 above.

725. *Ay, ay, O, ay*, etc. The song "represents the contrast between earthly and spiritual ideas, Arthur's real star on high and Tristram's phantom star on the level of earth. One star, Arthur's lofty ideal, was far distant, making its silent music up in heaven, too far for Tristram to reach to; the other, earthly delight, was near and seemed attainable; but one was real and will endure, the other will pass away when the winds — the sorrows and passions of earth — ruffle the mere, the human heart" (Littledale).

743. *He spoke, he turn'd*, etc. The 1st ed. reads:—

"He rose, he turn'd, and, flinging round her neck,
Claspt it; but while he bŏw'd himself to lay
Warm kisses in the hollow of her throat,
Out of the dark," etc.

748. "*Mark's way*," *said Mark.* Quoting what she had said (530 above) and he had overheard.

752. *The great Queen's bower was dark.* Her chamber was dark, as she had already fled to Almesbury.

GUINEVERE.

This Idyll was one of the four published in 1859, and was altered but little in subsequent editions.

The poet is indebted to Malory for only a few hints of the story — Arthur's discovery of the guilt of Lancelot and Guinevere; her condemnation to be burnt alive; her escape from the stake through Lancelot, who carries her off to his castle of La Joyeuse Gard; the siege of the castle by Arthur, who compels Lancelot to give up the Queen; and her retirement — but not until after Arthur's death — to Almesbury, where she "was ruler and abbess as reason would."

9. *For hither had she fled*, etc. The 1859 ed. reads: —

> "For hither had she fled, her cause of flight
> Sir Modred; he the nearest to the King,
> His nephew, ever like a subtle beast,
> Lay couchant," etc.

Littledale notes that, "by a curious coincidence, this is the very simile that Arthur Hallam used to describe Tennyson's fame waiting to come upon him:" —

> "A being full of clearest insight,
> . . . whose fame
> Is couching now with panther eyes intent,
> As who shall say, 'I 'll spring to him anon,
> And have him for my own.'"

Almesbury, now *Amesbury*, is about eight miles north of Salisbury, and the old Abbey Church is still standing. It is said to be on the site of an ancient British monastery, the foundation of which has been variously ascribed to Prince Ambrosius, who lived at the time of the Saxon invasion, and to one Ambri, a monk. This abbey appears to have been destroyed by the Danes, about the time of Alfred. About the year 980, Alfrida, or Ethelfrida, the Queen Dowager of the Saxon king Edgar, erected here a monastery for nuns, dedicating it to St. Mary and St. Melarius, a Cornish saint whose relics are preserved here. The house was of the Benedictine order, and continued as an independent monastery till the time of Henry II. in 1177, when the abbess was charged with immoral conduct, and the community was dissolved. Later it was made "a cell to the abbey of Fontevrault, in Anjou, whence a prioress and twenty-four nuns were brought to Amesbury." From this time the nunnery, with some changes, lasted until the general dissolution of such houses in the time of Henry VIII. Mary, the sixth daughter of Edward I., took the veil at Amesbury in 1285, together with thirteen young ladies of noble families. Two years later, Eleanor, queen of Henry III. and mother of Edward I., herself took the veil here, where she died and was buried in 1292. Amesbury finally became one of the richest nunneries in England, but how long it remained subject to Fontevrault we are not told. Aubrey says that the last lady abbess of Amesbury "was 140 yeares old when she dyed."

15. *Lords of the White Horse.* See on *Lancelot and Elaine*, 197 above.

22. *With plumes that mock'd the may.* That is, white as the hawthorn blossoms. Cf. *The Miller's Daughter*, 130: "The lanes, you know, were white with may." See also on *Gareth and Lynette*, 575 (vol. i. p. 198).

28. *Lissome.* Lithe, supple. See on *Merlin and Vivien*, 221 (vol. i. p. 215).

56. *I shudder*, etc. An ancient superstition.

97. *And part forever. Passion-pale they met*, etc. The 1859 ed. reads: —

> "And part forever. Vivien, lurking, heard.
> She told Sir Modred. Passion-pale they met."

120. *I will draw me into sanctuary.* That is, "take sanctuary," or seek refuge in a sacred place affording protection from arrest or legal process. In *Richard III.* (ii. 2. 66) Queen Elizabeth says to her son: "Come, come, my boy; we will to sanctuary;" and they go to the sanctuary at Westminster, within the Abbey precincts, which retained its privileges as a refuge for criminals until the dissolution of the monastery, and for debtors until 1601. In the *Comedy of Errors*, when Antipholus has taken refuge in the priory, and Adriana wishes to have him brought forth, the abbess says to her: —

> "He took this place for sanctuary,
> And it shall privilege him from your hands."

124. *There kiss'd, and parted weeping.* As already intimated, this is not the end of their intimacy as Malory tells the story. After they part, Lancelot rescues Guinevere from the death at the stake to which she is condemned by Arthur, and carries her off to his castle of Joyous Gard. There he is besieged by Arthur and Gawain; but the Pope sends bulls to put a stop to the quarrel. Then Guinevere is given up to Arthur with great pomp and ceremony, as described by Malory (xx. 14): "Then Sir Launcelot purveyed him an hundred knights, and all were clothed in green velvet, and their horses trapped to their heels, and every knight held a branch of olive in his hand in tokening of peace, and the queen had four and twenty gentlewomen following her in the same wise, and Sir Launcelot had twelve coursers following him, and on every courser sat a young gentleman, and all they were arrayed in green velvet, with sarpis of gold about their quarters, and the horse trapped in the same wise down to the heels with many ouches, set with stones and pearls in gold, to the number of a thousand; and she and Sir Launcelot were clothed in white cloth of gold tissue, and right so as ye have heard, as the French book maketh mention, he rode with the queen from Joyous Gard to Carlisle, and so Sir Launcelot rode throughout Carlisle, and so in the castle, that all men might behold and wit you well there was many a weeping eye. And then Sir Launcelot himself alight, and avoided his horse, and took the queen, and so led her where king Arthur was in his seat, and Sir Gawaine sat afore him, and many other great lords. So when Sir Launcelot saw the king and Sir Gawaine, then he

led the queen by the arm, and then he kneeled down, and the queen both. Wit you well, then was there many bold knights there with king Arthur that wept as tenderly as though they had seen all their kin afore them. So the king sat still, and said no word." But Lancelot makes a long speech, and there is much further parleying between Gawain and Lancelot; after which (xx. 17), "Sir Launcelot said unto Guenever, in hearing of the king and them all, Madam, now I must depart from you and this noble fellowship for ever; and sithen it is so, I beseech you to pray for me, and say me well, and if ye be hard bestad by any false tongues, lightly, my lady, let send me word, and if any knight's hands may deliver you by battle, I shall deliver you. And therewithal Sir Launcelot kissed the queen, and then he said all openly, Now let see what he be in this place, that dare say the queen is not true unto my lord Arthur: let see who will speak, and he dare speak. And therewith he brought the queen to the king, and then Sir Launcelot took his leave and departed; and there was neither king, duke ne earl, baron ne knight, lady nor gentlewoman, but all they wept as people out of their mind, except Sir Gawaine."

Lancelot then goes to his castle "over the sea," where Arthur, instigated by Gawain, again besieges him; but the king is called back to England by tidings that Modred has usurped his crown and would fain marry Guinevere. Then follows the war with Modred and "the last great battle in the west," as described in *The Passing of Arthur*.

147. *For housel or for shrift.* For receiving the eucharist or for confession.

148. *Communed.* Accented on the first syllable, as regularly in Shakespeare. Cf. *Hamlet*, iv. 5. 202: "Laertes, I must commune with your grief," etc.

166. *Late, late, so late!* It is hardly necessary to say that the song is founded upon the parable of the wise and foolish virgins (*Matthew*, xxv.).

289. *Bude and Bos.* Districts of Cornwall.

292. *Tintagil.* See on *The Last Tournament*, 504. The 1859 ed. has "Dundagil" here.

294. *Approven.* Elsewhere Tennyson has "approved." See on *Balin and Balan*, 36 (vol. i. p. 211).

345. *Scape.* Not to be printed *'scape.* See on *Gareth and Lynette*, 626 (vol. i. p. 199).

367. *The simple, fearful child.* For *fearful* in the archaic sense of full of fear, frightened, cf. *Venus and Adonis*, 677: "Pursue these fearful creatures o'er the downs"—the creatures being "the timorous flying hare" (called "the fearful flying hare" in *3 Henry VI.* ii. 5. 130) the fox, and the roe. See also *Judges*, vii. 3, *Matthew*, viii. 26, etc.

382. *Retinue.* Accented on the second syllable; as in *The Princess*, iii. 179: "Went forth in long retinue, following up;" and *Aylmer's Field*, 842: "The dark retinue reverencing death." So Milton, in the two instances in which he uses the word in verse (*P. L.* v. 355, and *P. R.* ii. 419), and Shakespeare (the only instance in verse) in *Lear*, i. 4. 221: "But other of your insolent retinue."

385. *For the time Was may-time.* That is, when the hawthorn was in bloom. See on 22 above.

400. *Where first she saw the King.* The ed. of 1859 has "when first," etc.

420. *Dead before thy shame.* We learn here that Leodogran, the father of Guinevere, is no more.

421. *Well is it that no child is born of thee.* Littledale remarks here: "This is the one unduly hard thing that Arthur says in his otherwise just words to her. Well it may be, now, in her dishonor, that she has no children; but how different, with sons and daughters — the true 'warmth of double life' — around her, her career might have been it is not difficult to imagine. 'He has no children,' says Macduff of Malcolm; we may say it here of Arthur. It makes him harder on her than he might otherwise have been.

"The line is introduced no doubt to lend force to the antithesis that follows: 'The children born of thee,' etc."

429. *In twelve great battles.* See on *Lancelot and Elaine*, 280, above.

470. *To honor his own word*, etc. This line is not in the 1859 ed.

481. *Before I wedded thee.* Originally, "until I wedded thee."

491. *Scathe.* Injury, damage. Cf. *King John*, ii. 1. 75: "To do offence and scathe in Christendom," etc.

508. *Yet must I leave thee*, etc. Littledale remarks: "It is a question, perhaps, whether Arthur's speech would not have been the better for the omission of lines 509–520, and had read —

> "'I am not made of so slight elements.
> Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.
> Better the King's waste hearth and aching heart
> Than thou reseated,' etc.

After all he has said of her sin previously, it is almost an anti-climax to divert our attention from his own particular case to the general case of the man 'Who either for his own *or children's sake*' lets the false wife abide within his house. He has just emphasized the fact of her being childless, and now he speaks of the general case when there are children to be considered. It may be urged that it is Arthur's nature to be didactic. This is true, but his maxims are out of place here alone with Guinevere: there is no necessity for this further justification of his course of action."

535. *The flaming death.* Being burnt at the stake, a punishment for unfaithful wives, mentioned several times by Malory.

569. *Where I must strike*, etc. The 1859 ed. reads: —

> "Where I must strike against my sister's son,
> Leagued with the lords of the White Horse and knights
> Once mine, and strike him dead," etc.

601. *Moving ghostlike to his doom.* "That doom is told in *The Passing of Arthur*, but that he is already enwound by its misty pall, and himself a ghost in it, is nobly conceived, and as splendidly expressed" (Stopford Brooke).

642. *I yearn'd for warmth*, etc. Originally, "I wanted warmth," etc.

657. *Made her vail her eyes.* See on *The Last Tournament*, 150 above.

677. *Dole.* Charity.

679. *Haler.* Healthier; in a moral sense.

692. *To where beyond these voices there is peace.* As Littledale remarks, "The pathetic gentleness of the cadence is as exquisite as that in Milton's finest verse, 'And I shall shortly be with them that rest.'"

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.

This Idyll in its present form was first published in the *Holy Grail* volume, 1869; but, with the exception of 169 lines at the beginning and 30 at the close, it was printed in 1842 in *The Epic*, which is still included in the collected poems.

The story of the Idyll is taken from Malory (xxi. 5).

6-28. *For on their march . . . but shall not die.* These twenty-three lines are not in the 1869 ed., which continues thus: "Before that last weird battle in the west," etc.

30. *There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain,* etc. Cf. Malory (xxi. 3): "And then he fell on slumbering again, not sleeping nor thoroughly waking. So the king seemed verily that there came Sir Gawaine unto him with a number of fair ladies with him. And when king Arthur saw him, then he said, Welcome, my sister's son, I wend thou hadst been dead, and now I see thee on live, much am I beholding unto Almighty Jesu. Oh, fair nephew, and my sister's son, what be these ladies that hither be come with you? Sir, said Sir Gawaine, all these be ladies for whom I have foughten when I was man living: and all these are those that I did battle for in righteous quarrel. And God hath given them that grace at their great prayer, because I did battle for them, that they should bring me hither unto you, thus much had God given me leave, for to warn you of your death; for and ye fight as to-morn with Sir Mordred, as ye both have assigned, doubt ye not ye must be slain, and the most part of your people on both parties. And for the great grace and goodness that Almighty Jesu hath unto you, and for pity of you and many more other good men there shall be slain, God hath sent me to you, of his special grace, to give you warning, that in no wise ye do battle as to-morn, but that ye take a treaty for a month day; and proffer you largely, so as to-morn to be put in a delay. For within a month shall come Sir Launcelot, with all his noble knights, and rescue you worshipfully, and slay Sir Mordred and all that ever will hold with him. Then Sir Gawaine and all the ladies vanished. And anon the king called upon his knights, squires, and yeomen, and charged them wightly to fetch his noble lords and wise bishops unto him. And when they were come, the king told them his vision, what Sir Gawaine had told him, and warned him that if he fought on the morn he should be slain."

61. *Once thine,* etc. The 1869 ed. reads:—

> "Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but baser now
> Than heathen scoffing at their vows and thee."

68. *And brake the petty kings, and fought with Rome.* This line is not in the 1869 ed., in which the next line begins with "And thrust," etc.

82. *A land of old*, etc. See on *Lancelot and Elaine*, 35, above.

85. *And the long mountains*. Originally, "the long mountain"

87. *The phantom circle*. The indistinct line dividing the sea from the sky in the distance.

90. *When the great light of heaven*, etc. When the sun was lowest; that is, at the winter solstice.

129. *Only the wan wave*, etc. Originally, "the waste wave."

170. *So all day long*, etc. With this sonorous line the early *Morte d'Arthur* begins.

Stedman in his *Victorian Poets*, remarks: "The *Morte d'Arthur* of 1842 is Homeric to the farthest degree possible in the slow, Saxon movement of the verse; grander, with its 'hollow oes and aes,' than any succeeding canto, always excepting *Guinevere*."

175. *The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him*. After this line, the *Morte d'Arthur* of 1842 has the line, "Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights;" omitted here, of course, because the fact is mentioned in line 2 of the new matter.

180. *A great water*. Brimley (in his paper on Tennyson in *Cambridge Essays*, 1855) remarks: "This phrase has probably often been ridiculed as affected phraseology for 'a great lake;' but it is an instance of the intense presentative power of Mr. Tennyson's genius. It precisely marks the appearance of a large lake outspread and taken in at one glance from a high ground. Had 'a great lake' been substituted for it, the phrase would have needed to be translated by the mind into water of a certain shape and size, before the picture was realized by the imagination. 'A great *lake*' is, in fact, one degree removed from the sensuous to the logical, — from the individual appearance to the generic name, and is, therefore, less poetic and pictorial."

195. *Thou, therefore take my brand Excalibur*, etc. Cf. Malory (xxi. 5): "But my time hieth fast, said the king. Therefore said Arthur, take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water side, and when thou comest there, I charge thee throw my sword in that water, and come again, and tell me what thou there seest. My lord, said Bedivere, your commandment shall be done, and lightly bring you word again. So Sir Bedivere departed, and by the way he beheld that noble sword, that the pommel and haft were all of precious stones, and then he said to himself, If I throw this rich sword in the water, thereof shall never come good, but harm and loss. And then Sir Bedivere hid Excalibur under a tree. And as soon as he might he came again unto the king, and said he had been at the water, and had thrown the sword into the water. What sawest thou there? said the king. Sir, he said, I saw nothing but waves and winds. That is untruly said of thee, said the king; therefore go thou lightly again, and do my command as thou art to me lief and dear, spare not, but throw it in. Then Sir Bedivere returned again, and took the sword in his hand; and then him thought sin and shame to throw away that noble sword; and so eft he hid the sword, and returned again, and told to the king that he had been at the water, and done his commandment. What saw thou there? said the king. Sir, he said, I saw nothing but the waters wap and the waves wan. Ah traitor, untrue, said king Arthur, now hast thou be

trayed me twice. Who would have wend that thou that hast been to me so lief and dear, and thou art named a noble knight, and would betray me for the riches of the sword. But now go again lightly, for thy long tarrying putteth me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold. And but if thou do now as I bid thee, if ever I may see thee, I shall slay thee with mine own hands, for thou wouldest for my rich sword see me dead. Then Sir Bedivere departed, and went to the sword, and lightly took it up, and went to the water side, and there he bound the girdle about the hilts, and then he threw the sword as far into the water as he might, and there came an arm and an hand above the water, and met it, and caught it, and so shook it thrice and brandished, and then vanished away the hand with the sword in the water. So Sir Bedivere came again to the king, and told him what he saw. Alas, said the king, help me hence, for I dread me I have tarried over long. Then Sir Bedivere took the king upon his back, and so went with him to that water side. And when they were at the water side, even fast by the bank hoved a little barge, with many fair ladies in it, and among them all was a queen, and all they had black hoods, and all they wept and shrieked when they saw king Arthur. Now put me into the barge, said the king: and so he did softly. And there received him three queens with great mourning, and so they set him down, and in one of their laps king Arthur laid his head, and then that queen said, Ah, dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? Alas, this wound on your head hath caught over much cold. And so then they rowed from the land; and Sir Bedivere beheld all those ladies go from him. Then Sir Bedivere cried, Ah, my lord Arthur, what shall become of me now ye go from me, and leave me here alone among mine enemies. Comfort thyself, said the king, and do as well as thou mayest, for in me is no trust for to trust in. For I will into the vale of Avilion, to heal me of my grievous wound. And if thou hear never more of me, pray for my soul. But ever the queens and the ladies wept and shrieked, that it was pity to hear. And as soon as Sir Bedivere had lost the sight of the barge, he wept and wailed, and so took the forest, and so he went all that night, and in the morning he was ware betwixt two holts hoar of a chapel and an hermitage."

205. *But fling him far.* The personal pronoun *him* is used interchangeably with *it* in referring to the sword. The former has a suggestion of affection in Arthur's mouth, as of admiration in Bedivere's.

206. *Seest.* Printed "seëst" in the English editions, indicating that the poet meant it to be a dissyllable for the sake of euphony, though the metre does not require it.

211. *Hest.* Not to be printed *'hest*, as it is an independent word, often used by Shakespeare and other early writers.

219. *The shining levels of the lake.* "The classical *æquora* may have suggested the 'shining *levels*,' but there is a deeper reason for the change of phrase, for the 'great water,' as seen from the high ground, becomes a series of flashing surfaces when Sir Bedivere looks along it from its margin" (Brimley).

224. *Diamond sparks.* The reading of the *Morte d'Arthur* down to 1853 was "diamond studs."

228. *This way and that*, etc. A translation of Virgil, *Æneid*, iv. 285 "Atque animum nunc huc celerem, nunc dividit illuc."

238. *I heard the ripple*, etc. As Brimley remarks, "the 'ripple *washing in the reeds*' and 'the wild water *lapping on the crags*' are two phrases marking exactly the difference of sound produced by water swelling up against a permeable or impermeable barrier."

248. *Lief.* Loved, beloved. Cf. Spenser, *F. Q.* i. 3. 28: "Then leave you, my lief, yborn of heavenly berth;" and *Id.* iii. 2. 33: "tell me therefore, my liefest liefe." The superlative also occurs in *2 Henry VI.* iii. 1. 164: "my liefest liege," etc. *Alder-liefest* (dearest of all) is found in the same play, i. 1. 28: "mine alder-liefest sovereign."

251. *Across the ridge*, etc. This line was inserted in the *Morte d'Arthur* in 1853.

272. *Wrought by the lonely Maiden of the Lake.* See *The Coming of Arthur*, 285, and note in vol. i. p. 192.

300. *I will arise and slay thee with my hands.* As Forman remarks, this line is "one of the master touches of a masterly poem." Cf. Malory (x. 21): "I shall slay thee with mine own hands." See also the passage quoted on 195 above.

307. *The northern morn.* The *aurora borealis*. Cf. *The Talking Oak*, 275:—

> "The northern morning o'er thee shoot,
> High up, in silver spikes!"

Tennyson is fond of thus translating a classical term into the vernacular. Cf. "mother-city" for *metropolis* in *The Princess*, i. 111, and "mother town" in *In Memoriam*, xcviii.; also "tortoise" for *testudo* in *A Dream of Fair Women*, 207.

Brimley remarks on the present passage: "An inferior artist would have shouted through a page, and emptied a whole pallet of color, without any result but interrupting his narrative, where Tennyson in three lines strikingly illustrates the fact he has to tell, — associates it impressively with one of nature's grandest phenomena, and gives a complete picture of this phenomenon."

351. *Larger than human.* Cf. the description of Arthur in *Guinevere*, 598.

354. *Dry clash'd his harness*, etc. "We hear all the changes on the vowel *a* — every sound of it used to give the impression — and then, in a moment, the verse runs into breadth, smoothness, and vastness; for Bedivere comes to the shore and sees the great water:—

> "'And on a sudden, lo! the level lake
> And the long glories of the winter moon,'

in which the vowel *o* in its changes is used as the vowel *a* has been used before" (Stopford Brooke).

366. *Three queens.* Cf. *The Coming of Arthur*, 275 fol.

367. *A cry that shiver'd*, etc. "In some over-fastidious moods we might be inclined to charge this with a touch of that exaggeration which belongs to the 'spasmodic school;' but the cry comes from a company of spirits, amid mountains whose natural power of echo is heightened by the silence of night, the clearness of the wintry air, and the hardening effect of frost. Such a cry at such a time and in such a place would thrill from rock to rock, from summit to summit, till it

seemed to pierce the sky in a hurtling storm of multitudinous arrowy sounds, and die away in infinitely distant pulsations among the stars." (Brimley).

370. *Where no one comes*, etc. "This passage may seem at first to add nothing to the force of the comparison, as the shrillness of the wind would not be greater in an uninhabited place than anywhere else in open ground. But the mournfulness of the feeling a man would experience in such a place, from the sense of utter isolation and sterility, is blended with the naturally sad wail of the wind over a wide waste, and the addition thus becomes no mere completion of a thought of which only part is wanted for the illustration — though that were allowable enough, according to ordinary poetic usage, — but gives a heightening of sentiment without which the illustration itself would be incomplete and less impressive" (Brimley).

Cf. *The Palace of Art*, 65: —

> "One seem'd all dark and red, — a tract of sand,
> And some one pacing there alone,
> Who paced forever in a glimmering land,
> Lit with a low large moon."

Here the impression of loneliness is heightened by the introduction of the solitary wanderer into the picture. We have often thought of this in reading the poem, as in looking on the large painting by Lear, illustrating the passage, which hangs in the hall of Tennyson's mansion at Aldworth.

373. *So to the barge they came.* The reading in the *Morte d'Arthur* is "And to the barge," etc.

379. *And dropping bitter tears against a brow.* The 1869 ed., like the *Morte d'Arthur*, has "his brow."

383. *Cuisses.* Armor for the thighs; also spelt *cuishes*. Cf. *1 Henry IV.* iv. 1. 105: —

> "I saw young Harry with his beaver on,
> His cuisses on his thighs, gallantly arm'd," etc.

"The passage is a fine instance of a poetical use of simile and figure. The moon fading in the early morning, the dazzling brightness of the rising sun, the shattered column, the glancing flight of a shooting star, bring before the mind not only the dying king, pale and bleeding, but the contrast between his present weakness and the glory and triumphs of his chivalrous and brilliant life. In a few lines his whole story is told: it is not merely a dying warrior who lies before us, but the strength, the state, the splendor, and enjoyment of his past life flash before the imagination, and deepen the sadness and humiliation of his defeat and death" (Brimley).

408. *The old order changeth*, etc. Repeated from *The Coming of Arthur*, 508.

422. *For so the whole round earth*, etc. Mr. J. C. Collins compares Archdeacon Hare's sermon on *The Law of Self-Sacrifice*: "This is the golden chain of love, whereby the whole creation is bound to the throne of the Creator."

427. *The island-valley of Avilion.* Cf. *Gareth and Lynette*, 492, and see vol. i, p. 198.

435. *Huting a wild carol*, etc. Cf. *The Dying Swan.*

Sir Thomas Browne, in his *Vulgar Errors*, says: "From great antiquity, and before the melody of Syrens, the musical note of swans hath been commended, and they sing most sweetly before their death; for thus we read in Plato, that from the opinion of *metempsychosis*, or transmigration of the souls of men into the bodies of beasts most suitable unto their human condition, after his death Orpheus the musician became a swan; thus was it the bird of Apollo, the god of music, by the Greeks; and an hieroglyphick of music among the Egyptians, from whom the Greeks derived their conception."

440. *And on the mere the wailing died away.* Here the original *Morte d'Arthur* ends.

The next five lines are not in the 1869 ed. which goes on thus: —

> "At length he groan'd, and turning slowly clomb
> The last hard footstep of that iron crag."

445. *From the great deep*, etc. Repeated from Merlin's "riddling triplets" in *The Coming of Arthur*, 410.

463. *Even to the highest.* The 1869 ed. has "E'en," for which the printer is probably responsible, as Tennyson never uses it.

TO THE QUEEN.

This was first printed in the "Library Edition" of the Poems, 1872–73.

3. *That rememberable day.* Referring to the public thanksgiving in February, 1872, on the recovery of the Prince of Wales from typhoid fever.

12. *Thunderless lightnings striking under sea*, etc. Congratulatory despatches by submarine telegraph.

14. *That true North*, etc. When Manitoba was added to the Dominion of Canada, complaint was made in England of the cost of maintaining the colonial possessions in North America. Mr. Justin McCarthy, in his *History of Our Own Times*, says: "For some years a feeling was spreading in England which began to find expression in repeated and very distinct suggestions that the Canadians had better begin to think of looking out for themselves. Many Englishmen complained of this country being expected to undertake the principal cost of the defences of Canada, and to guarantee her railway schemes, especially when the commercial policy which Canada adopted towards England was one of a strictly protective character."

20. *The roar of Hougoumont.* The battle of Waterloo. The *Château of Hougoumont*, with its massive buildings, its gardens and plantations, was occupied by the Allies, and "formed the key to the British position." It is computed that "during the day the attacks of nearly 12,000 men were launched against this miniature fortress, notwithstanding which the garrison held out to the last."

35. *For one to whom I made it*, etc. Referring to the dedication of the *Idylls* to the memory of Prince Albert.

38. *Ideal manhood closed in real man.* This line does not appear in any English or American edition up to the present time (1898), except the "Cambridge" edition; but the *Memoir* (vol. ii. p. 129) states that the poet, thinking that "perhaps he had not made the real humanity of the King sufficiently clear in his epilogue," inserted this line "in 1891, as his last correction." It is probably through mere oversight that it has not been inserted in the editions published since 1891.

42. *Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleor's.* Geoffrey of Monmouth and Malory, whose name was also written *Malorye*, *Maleore*, *Malleor*, etc.

54. *Cowardice, the child of lust for gold.* Cf. *Maud*, i. 1. 6: —

> "Why do they prate of the blessings of Peace? we have made them a curse,
> Pickpockets, each hand lusting for all that is not its own;
> And lust of gain, in the spirit of Cain, is it better or worse
> Than the heart of the citizen hissing in war on his own hearthstone?"

56. *With poisonous honey stolen from France.* Cf. *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, 145: "Set the maiden fancies wallowing in the troughs of Zolaism," etc. Littledale quotes Goldwin Smith, *Essays*: "As to French novels, Carlyle says of one of the most famous of the last century that after reading it you ought to wash seven times in Jordan; but after reading the French novels of the present day, in which lewdness is sprinkled with sentimental rose-water, and deodorized, but not disinfected, your washings had better be seventy times seven."

61. *Crowning common-sense*, etc. Cf. the *Ode on the Death of Wellington*, 32: "Rich in saving common-sense."

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